

GOVETT ON THE PARABLES

By
Robert Govett



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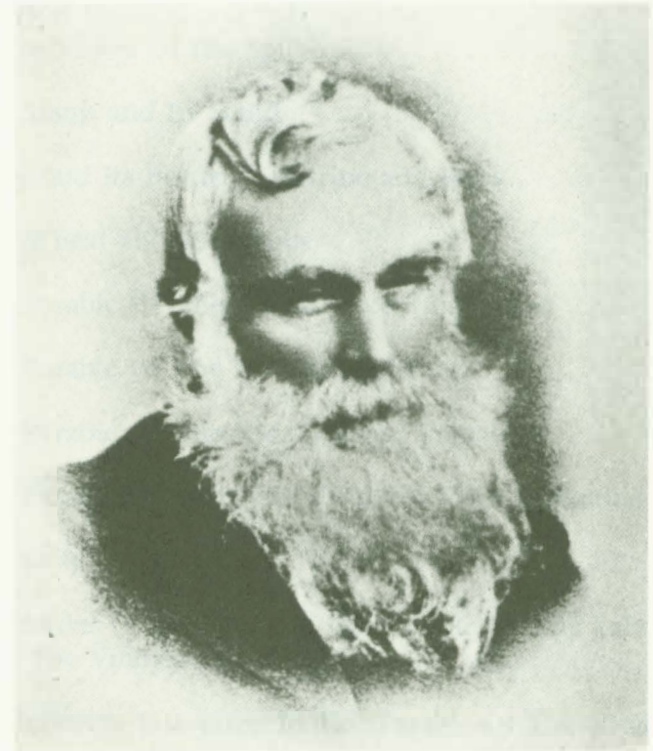
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ROBERT GOVETT, TOWARDS THE END OF HIS MINISTRY

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THE
BRAZEN SERPENT.

BY
R. GOVETT.

Third Edition.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

How is man, the sinner, to be saved by a just and holy God? Jesus points, in His discourse with Nicodemus, to a scene in the history of Israel in the desert, as discovering to us the mind of God hereupon: a scene of sin, of judgment and death, and yet of grace and life.

1. Let us look at the SIN.

Israel was tired of the barren and burning wilderness. They forgot the principle on which they agreed that they would be dealt with by their God—‘according to their deserts.’ They forgot too their sin at Kadesh-barnea, which condemned them to forty years’ wandering in the desert. Edom, when they were a second time close to the land of promise, refused them a passage through his land. And Jehovah will not allow them to force a way through by arms. They must toil anew to compass his land. Then murmurs break out against God, and against Moses His servant. ‘The wilderness! the wilderness!—never the promised land! This evil place, where there is neither bread nor water; and this light, unsubstantial manna!’

2. Then come JUDGMENT and DEATH.

The desert has many reptiles of poison. But hitherto serpents and scorpions were kept from them. Now the Lord sends snakes on the murmurers. Fiery serpents invade them, terrible in their look, their swiftness, their bite of venom. The result is quick death. They wrestle indeed with all their might against the last enemy. We may be sure they combat it with herbs and metals, with salves, and lotions, and draughts. There were Egyptians there too; men skilled in charms and incantations. They tried the best means that experience could teach them, but in vain. They died; old and young, doctor and patient. “Much people of Israel died.” Brought to despair of their own resources, they acknowledge at length the hand of God. They see in this judgment the avenging of their sin. They had by their bitter speeches offended their best friends, Moses, and his God. They betake themselves to Moses with confession of their sin.

This picture was, as it regards the sin, true of Israel in the days of our Lord. The people were now in the land of promise, high in their ideas of their own excellence, believing themselves to be God’s obedient people, and worthy to receive the kingdom of glory of which their prophets spoke. But they were not accepted of God as His people. They were refusing the better Mediator, the Son of God. They overlooked this their crying sin, and their murmurs, and blasphemies, and murderous thoughts against the Christ of God. The kingdom could not come, while they were in this state of unbelief. The kingdom could not come, till sin was put away by the sacrifice of Christ.

The sins of men *now* are like those of Israel then. They are at enmity with God, uneasy within, and on the way to death; murmuring, when all goes not on as they would have it. They are ready to lay the blame anywhere but on their own shoulders; and unable to deliver themselves from death and judgment.

3. Let us look now at GOD'S REMEDY.

Israel, in their plea with Moses, ask the removal of the serpents. They would give up the bitten ones to death. 'There was no hope for those once stung; for they were unable to counteract the deadly bite. But let the healthy be spared! Remove the enemy!' Moses prays for them, according to their desire; and obtains a reply of mercy.

But the Lord's plan of relief is very different from theirs. His design is *not* to take away the serpents, but *to save the bitten!* He would show, that what to them is hopeless, is the very occasion of His glory and power. Those under death and beyond human rescue are not beyond His aid. This decision of the Most High was the fittest to exhibit to us salvation. For God's deliverance is not of the innocent and healthy, but of the guilty, under wrath and sentence of death.

Now in such a case it would have been natural to man to propose some such mode of cure as this:— 'There is, at the foot of the rocks, a creeping plant of white flowers; take some of it, pound it in a mortar, put water to it, and let the bitten drink!'

But God's scheme was very different; designed to teach us that salvation is not to be through our work, but through another's. His cure is something ready prepared for them by the Mediator. Moses was commanded to make a serpent of brass, (or copper,) and to lift it on a pole. It was only needful to *look* at that, and life should return to the bitten.

A strange way—was it not? The very creature they hated and feared most, at the sight of which they shuddered as the messenger of *death*, to bring them *life!*

"My thoughts are not as your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord."

Yet there was much to recommend this; much to make them thankful. The youngest can comprehend it; the poorest can use it; it is within reach of the

dying! Quick is the poison, but the cure is more rapid still. Let the sufferer look at the serpent of brass on the pole! And straightway the languid, glazing eye gleams anew with life! The livid face changes to a healthy hue! The swelling subsides! The tide of health flows back!

The serpents are not removed; but now there is a remedy against their power of death. This makes the case fitter to represent to us the way of salvation. The grace of God in Christ does not remove Satan and his temptations. The Old Serpent still stings, and thousands die. But there is deliverance to the uttermost; a rescue for his dupes at the very last stage, when judgment has already enclosed the guilty. The dying robber found it so. When the due reward of his deeds was upon him, when, before the setting sun, death would seize him, still he was delivered by faith's look at the crucified One. "Lord, remember me when Thou comest in thy kingdom!" "Verily I say unto thee, *To-day* shalt thou be with Me in Paradise!"

4. But what is the MEANING TO US OF THIS MODE OF CURE?

(1.) By the serpent is clearly meant the *devil*—"the Old Serpent"—the author of sin, the executioner of death: Rev. xii. 9; xx. 2. He it was who first taught discontent and distrust of God to Eve; though in that garden of beauty there was everything to testify of the goodness of God.

He it was who was now teaching discontent and distrust of Jehovah to Israel His people. Though the manna daily fell, though the waters failed not in that land of drought, though the Lord dwelt in their midst, and went before them to protect and guide, though His Mediator and His priests were there to bring every thing they needed, they murmur.

To Eve in Eden, Satan seemed the kind and pitying friend. She need not fear; death should not assail

her. Now the serpent, the deceiver, *himself inflicts death*; and man is powerless against him!

(2.) What meant the serpent's LIFTING UP UPON THE POLE?

It represents the devil as *lying under the wrath and curse of God, as the God of law and justice*. "For he that hangeth on a tree is *accursed of God*:" Deut. xxi. 23. Here is advance then. The curse which the Lord pronounced upon the Tempter in Eden, is renewed and enlarged, by Jehovah as the God of Law. In Eden his sentence was, that he should go upon his belly, and eat dust. Now he is presented to the eye of Israel as cursed by the God of Law; an enemy fixed under the ban of Jehovah.

For why was the serpent a copper one? Why not one of the very serpents of the desert, by which this judgment was inflicted? Because one of those serpents lifted on the pole would, beneath the scorching sun and the dews of night, soon have crumbled to dust; and it would have seemed as if the wrath of God against this foe of God and man were to be but a *temporary* thing. But the serpent of brass lifted on the tree is to abide there under the curse, powerless for ever, a spectacle of *sin*, as the Tempter; of *weakness*, and of *woe*, as arrested and sentenced by the Most High.

In the Garden the first ray of hope to our offending parents broke forth from the sentence upon him who had deceived them. But Satan was still at work, tempting God's people of Israel, His ransomed ones. The curse then of Law, as well as of the Garden, lights upon him. The devil is indeed mighty against man the transgressor, to slay him whom he has duped. But God in His wisdom enlarges and renews the curse of Eden, and makes it visible to His people Israel. For law renders to each his desert; and law's awards shall one day be manifest.

(3.) WHAT MEANT LIFE FLOWING FROM THE LOOK AT THE LIFTED SNAKE?

Out of this woe and doom inflicted on man's enemy comfort and life were to flow to the sufferers by him, if only they will look to the Mediator, and not trust to themselves. Saith the weary heart of man—"Is it ever to be thus? Ever Satan's power and human weakness? Temptation, sin, and death? Doth not God care, that His enemy pushes successfully his plans of destruction throughout the wide empire of the Most High?"

No! It is not to be always thus. The foe of God and man shall at length be arrested and fixed powerless under the wrath of the Lawgiver, whose subjects he has deceived and destroyed. And man shall be delivered. A way of *life out of death* is opened to all those who turn to God's remedy! The bitten showed the serpent's power of death. But the restored life of him who received God's remedy discovers God's scheme; enabling the sentenced sinner to live before him, by a new life.

This is fully exhibited to us in God's last book. There we read of the Great Deceiver seized and cast into the ever-burning lake, to be tormented with his faithless sons in fire and brimstone for ever: Rev. xx. 10; xxi. 8.

Earth shall not be alway 'the region of the shadow of death.' Justice shall grasp and cage the Great Usurper; and he shall receive the due reward of his deeds. Satan brought in death on men. But God, Who raises the dead, hath, by His Son's resurrection, brought in eternal life, a new life beyond the death of Eden's sentence and righteousness wherewithal to clothe the offenders who believe His tidings of great joy.

Jesus testifies to Nicodemus:—

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but should have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life:" John iii. 14—16.

How then does the salvation of God through Christ Jesus His Son, answer to the deliverance in the desert?

(1.) Jesus was to resemble the brazen serpent in *being lifted up*. "And I, *if I be lifted up from the earth*, will draw all men unto me. This He said *signifying what death He should die*:" John xii. 32, 33. His death was to be *public*, seen of all, as truly as the lifted serpent in the camp of Israel. He was to be fastened to the cross, lifted up between heaven and earth. He was to be lifted up as "the Son of *Man*." The Seed of the Woman is to bruise the serpent's head. The serpent was first to bruise His *heel*. This word foretold the Saviour's death by crucifixion. For that is the only death in which the heels are bruised, by being driven against the cross-beam when nailed thereto. Then will Jesus fulfil the curse of the Law against Satan. The Saviour's turn is at hand: He will bruise the Destroyer's head!

(2.) The salvation of Jesus is like that ancient cure of God, in its *source*. Moses the Mediator provided the cure, in the formation of the serpent of brass. Israel had only need to apply it. Jesus is now the Mediator, and He provides *Himself*! If the serpent of brass could heal the body, how much more can the Son of God heal the soul?

(3.) The true remedy of God resembles the cure in the desert, in regard of its *application*. The cure was complete when it came from the Mediator's hand. All that was needed was to accept it. And acceptance was proved by looking to it. The dying contributed nothing towards its healing power. Jesus is now the Mediator; Who saves us, by having endured death in our stead, and by having brought in a life beyond death, and the curse of the law. A look of faith to Him as the Saviour suffices to deliver. But it must be the look of *faith*. The look of nature availed not. Nature stumbles at God's way and word. Thousands saw Jesus dying on the cross, and only jested at the powerless

sufferer. Such perished. They looked only for the salvation of the flesh, the prolonging of this life under sin and death. "*Save thyself and us!*"

Sinner! salvation comes through another's suffering your deserts, and dying in your stead. It is a complete salvation through *another's* work and *another's* death. 'Look and live!' "*Look unto Me*, and be ye *saved*, all ye ends of the earth!" Isa. xiv. 22.

(4) But here a serious DIFFICULTY meets us.

How is *Christ* like the *serpent*?—the creature of crookedness, of venom and death? How is the serpent like Christ the healer? the Lord of grace? And if the serpent signify the *devil*, the difficulty is increased. Is *Jesus* like the *devil*? the ever-blessed Son of God like the enemy of God and man, the liar and the murderer? The reply to this has ever been felt to be a difficulty.

In the answer hereto the glory of God in our salvation shines out.

1. *Law* gives the *Chief Culprit* his due. To the *Old Serpent*, the Liar and the Murderer, it awards the *curse*. Lo the serpent lifted up! What says it? 'The ban of Jehovah will fasten upon the first and chief offender for evermore! It is his full and fixed desert.'

2. *But does the Son of God deserve to be cursed?* He too was lifted up. May the curse light on Him? In righteousness—No! It could only be in grace. He deserves it *not*! How could law curse the perfectly obedient one? It could only bless and reward Him, as the Righteous in all His course. Yet there was one way in which the curse even of the law might fix upon the Righteous One. The law pronounced one *mode of death accursed*. "*For he that is hanged is accursed of God*:" Deut. xxi. 23. This then was God's plan, that the Blessed Son of God might become a curse, and by bearing it in our stead deliver us from under it. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse

of the Law, *being made a curse in our stead*; for it is written, 'Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree,' that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles : " Gal. iii. 13.

Are the cross and the curse the due of the Righteous One? Are not the crown and the throne rather His? Son of Abraham, Son of David, should not all things be set beneath His feet?

The crucifixion and the curse were not the due of Christ as the Righteous One. But He bore them in our stead, as our gracious substitute. This was the Father's scheme of deliverance, this the Son's acceptance. The Beloved Son "*must*" be fixed beneath the curse, if we, the guilty, are to come out from the darkness of woe into the sunshine of the Father's countenance. For the God of Law "*must*" act righteously. The Governor of the universe "*must*" maintain and magnify His just laws. The God of truth must keep His word.

But is not Jehovah the God of mercy also?

Here is the love of God, as never seen before! The Father gives up to death under the curse His guiltless Son! The Son in wondrous grace consents. It was Abraham's chief glory, that he gave up his beloved Isaac to be a sacrifice. It was Isaac's chief praise that he was content to suffer. "They went both of them together" to the altar and its fire. But here is a greater Father; here the Son of God surrenders Himself! Isaac was spared, after the knife was lifted to slay him. The Son of God goes through the curse and death! Law finds in Him all perfection, and yet He is the substitute of the guilty. He obeys its commands as none has obeyed before; He suffers its penalty, as none had suffered before or since. What was Moses' gift of the brass, and his care to frame the serpent and fix it on the tree, compared with the Son's gift of *Himself*, and His real agony on the cross and death? Moses can show justice doing its stern work

on the Chief of Trespassers. The Gospel shows us wrath lying on the guiltless One, that the guilty may go free! Law, enforced on us sinners, must destroy. Grace brings us life! Law kills its transgressor. But the Gospel brings in life, for it brings in the Son of God, in Whom is life eternal. Here is seen Jehovah the Healer, in a way we could not have expected: Ex. xv. 26. But to Him the glory also is coming, when His enemy is put beneath His feet. The Son of Man shall 'be lifted up' in a better sense, in the day of His kingdom and glory; when Satan, the Prince of this world, is cast into the pit. Those who walk now in humiliation with Christ the rejected, will reign with Him in the day of His throne.

'BUT HOW FAR DOES THIS REMEDY OF GOD EXTEND?'

The sinner, ingenious in his devices against his own salvation, sometimes asks,—'How do I know that the Saviour died for me? Can I know whether God has elected me to salvation or not?'

This passage tells us how wide is the redemption offered. "God so loved *the world* that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in Him should not perish." What does John mean by "the world"? The opposite to God's elect, the whole array of men who lie in the arms of the Wicked One. The serpent of brass was provided for Israel alone. This is God's grace to mankind. It is "the Son of *Man*" offered up for the sin of *men*.

What was the preparation necessary to enjoy the benefit of the remedy? Was it some good thing offered by the receiver?

No! It was offered to all the *bitten*. It was their misery, their certain death without it, which awoke God's compassion. Who were the bitten? Those who had *offended God by murmuring against Him*. It was then the compassion of the Lord toward those who were *evil* that provided the cure.

"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save"—

whom?—those who are sorry? those who promise to amend? Nay! but “*the lost*.” Luke xix. 10.

What is the condition of being admitted into yonder hospital, to its careful nursing day and night, its shelter, its supplies of food? Not sound legs, but broken ones! Not a healthy frame, but one stricken with disease!

You have not to *cure yourself*, before God takes you in hand to save. You have not, sinner, to provide a cure. It is already complete. You have not to compound a medicine which shall heal your soul. It is already complete, mixed, lying by your side. *You have only to take it!* You have not to put away your sins. Christ was offered to take them away. You have not to frame the serpent of brass, and lift it up. *All that is done.* *You have only to accept what God has provided by His Son.* “WILT THOU BE MADE WHOLE?” Be not like the poor powerless one of Bethesda, looking only on the many hindrances against the cure which he had experienced in his own expected way of deliverance. The Saviour *gives* pardon to those unable to procure it for themselves. There is no eternal life save in the Son of God, Who receiveth, not the righteous, but sinners.

If not, you must “*perish!*” The Gospel finds you under sin and death. You are one of the murmurers, bitten, thirsty, restless, unable to save yourself from death and damnation. “If any love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be *Anathema* (accursed). “Maranatha.” [The Lord is coming.] 1 Cor. xvi, 22. Look then to Jesus as the Saviour. Cry unto Him—“Lord, save me, I perish!” The refuser of mercy must perish in the storm of judgment to come. The acceptor of Christ shall rejoice for evermore! WHICH WILL YOU BE?

BABYLON MYSTICAL

AND

BABYLON LITERAL,

OR

THE VISION OF THE EPHAH.

ZECHARIAH V, 5.

Second Edition.

BABYLON MYSTICAL, &c.

"Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an Ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their iniquity* throughout all the earth. And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the Ephah.† And he said, This is Wickedness," (or 'the wicked woman').

THE present attempt to explain the vision before us, rests the basis of its interpretation upon the resemblance which exists between Zechariah and parts of the Apocalypse.

Let us briefly review these. In the third chapter of Zechariah, we have Joshua, the high priest that stood in the presence of God, resisted by Satan; in Rev. xii, we have Michael standing up, and the war in heaven commenced by Satan. In Zechariah we have Satan rebuked (iii, 2); in Revelation the dragon and his angels cast out: xii, 9. In Zechariah, we have the promise of God's "servant, the Branch;" in Revelation, as the result of the victory over Satan, we have a song of victory—"Now is come the salvation and the strength and the kingdom of our God, and the *authority of His*

* עֵינֶה. For this I read, with one Hebrew MS., the Septuagint, Syriac, Arabic, and Coptic—עֵינֶה. Jerome notices this difference, and remarks that it is owing to the great resemblance between ך and ך. Hence, as he says, "This error frequently occurs; because ך and ך are letters of the same form, but of different length, the one is mistaken for the other." Nor is this without sanction from the text itself; for as Houbigant remarks, we have in verse 8 exactly answering to זאת הרשעה.

† וְזֹאת. For this the Septuagint, Vulgate, Arabic, and Coptic, read וְהִנֵּה. I should prefer to read with nearly the same letters as the present text—וְהִנֵּה. "And there *came forth* a woman;" for how could the angel cast her into the ephah, if she were sitting there still?

Christ:” xii, 10. We get in the next vision, the two olive-trees. This is interpreted in the Apocalypse to signify the Two Witnesses, so that here the connection between the two is certain. The vision immediately preceding that before us, is the vision of the flying roll, which carries the curse. And this seems to answer to the cry of “woe” to the earth and to the sea, in the Apocalypse : xii, 12 ; viii, 13. That there is, therefore, a connection between the xi and xii chapters of Revelation, and the iii, iv, and v of Zechariah, is to me clear. Moreover, the principal subject of chapter xii in the Revelation—the flight of the Woman in heaven—is analogous to the flight of the Woman in the ephah, as will be shown.

I would now advert to the two different views concerning the Babylon of the Apocalypse, each of which has its supporters. Some believe that the Babylon spoken of is Rome ; others, that it is the ancient city on the Euphrates, restored. Both can plead evidence in their favour. What that evidence is, I proceed briefly to notice.

First, that Babylon is Rome, may be shown, I think, from the position in which the Evangelists saw the Woman. “He carried me away in the spirit into a wilderness” (*εις ερημον*, not *τον ερημον*, else it had been “the wilderness” of Arabia.) Now in the midst of a wilderness, Rome stands. “The surrounding country, called the Campagna of Rome, has been happily designated ‘a marble wilderness:’” Burgess’ Antiquities of Rome, p. 1. “Even before you leave the gates of Rome, you find yourself in a desert:” Rome in the 19th Century, chap. iii, p. 421. “The greater part of the Campagna of Rome is reduced to a dreary and desolate wilderness:” Gibbon, book vi, p. 643.

2. “The seven heads are seven mountains on which the Woman sitteth.” “Rome was always the city of the seven hills. They were held sacred, and a festival was annually celebrated in December, called the Septimontium:” Rome in 19th Century, ii.

3. “And they are seven kings.” (Thus I translate *και βασιλεις επτα εισιν*.) Now in commencing fulfilment of this, we may remark, that Rome’s history begins with the regal authority, which ends after *seven kings*

have wielded it : Romulus, Numa Pompilius, Tullus Hostilius, Ancus Martius, Tarquinius Priscus, Servius Tullius, Tarquinius Superbus.

4. “The Woman whom thou sawest is the great city, which holdeth the kingdom (*η εχουσα βασιλειαν*) over the kings of the earth.” It needs no proof that Rome was the ruling city at the time the Apocalypse was written.

5. “The Woman was drunken with blood of the saints.” Her arenas were places in which the Christians were publicly destroyed, and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus has flowed therein abundantly, as all must confess concerning (at least) its *pagan* times.

Now none of these points belong to Babylon. Its soil is rich, and cultivation is going on around it ; it has no hills, being one wide, sandy plain : it has had more than the required number of kings, nor did it hold any rule over the earth when St. John wrote ; nor, so far as we know, did the blood of the martyrs flow therein.

Yet there are difficulties in the way of interpreting Babylon to mean Rome : for first, it has never been a commercial city, and now the port is ruined, and the malaria creeping closer to Rome year by year, threatens its total desolation at no very distant period.

Again, though Babylon lies desolate, and time might seem to have fulfilled the prophecies of the Most High, yet when we come more accurately to examine them, we find—that Babylon was not destroyed as foretold, *suddenly*, but in a course of ages—that it is not uninhabited, as prophesied—Hillah, a modern city of 10,000 inhabitants, being built on its site ; and that there is not the continued going up of the smoke of its burning, as the prophets had declared. From this it appears, that the threats against the city of Babylon have yet to receive a perfect accomplishment. Hence it is argued by students of prophecy, that the Babylon of the Revelation is the old and literal Babylon on Euphrates. And certainly it would add much to the clearness of the subject, if we might so regard it : for it is as easy to conceive its rebuilding and enlargement, as that of Jerusalem. Moreover, it seems to be required by the statements of the Apocalypse. If you take the Euphrates of

the sixth trumpet and the sixth vial as literal (and this I am persuaded we should) how can you refuse to regard the Babylon of the seventh vial as being literal also?

Such is a sketch of the antagonist positions of many minds at the present time with regard to the Babylon of the Apocalypse. Each seems to have evidence, and each its difficulties. Is there any way then of *reconciling* the two opinions? I think there is: and that this vision furnishes the means of it. Let us, therefore, consider it in some detail.

It commences by the prophet's seeing an ephah going forth. Now an ephah was a standard measure for dry articles, by which goods, such as corn, were meted out. This is apparent from such passages as the following:—"Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn; and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat? making the *ephah small*, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?" Amos viii, 4, 5. "Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant *measure (ephah)* that is abominable?" Mic. vi, 10. Its use in commerce is also seen in such passages as Lev. xix, 36; Deut. xxv, 14.

An ephah then may well be a sign of commerce: and its being set forth here with the declaration—"This is their iniquity throughout all the earth," seems to indicate, that the times of which this is spoken, will be times of commerce, but commerce characterized by unlawful practices of deceit, and especially unfair advantages taken of the poor.

But we are told of the ephah that it "goeth forth." **XXV.** This word describes one leaving his home for another land, as we read concerning Abram. "And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they *went forth* to go into the land of Canaan:" Gen. xii, 5; so Jer. xv, 12; xxxviii, 17, 18. It is spoken of the inhabitants of a city leaving it, when pressed by calamity, which is, I suppose, its meaning in the vision

before us: "When Zedekiah, the king of Judah, saw them, and all the men of war, then they fled, and *went forth out* of the city by night. . . . and he *went out* the way of the plain:" Jer. xxxix, 4; so li, 7.

"And he said moreover, This is their iniquity throughout all the earth."

"Throughout all the earth." It is remarkable that Babel or Babylon was the first centre of "all the earth." "Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of *all the earth*: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of *all the earth*:" Gen. xi, 9. She appears again in the prophecy of the last times in the same connection with "all the earth." "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that hath made *all the earth* drunken:" Jer. li, 7. Just such is the position also of Babylon in the Apocalypse. She "corrupts the earth with her fornications:" Rev. xix, 2; xvii, 2, 5. The ephah of all the earth is but *one*, and that is the ephah of *iniquity*!

"And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and behold one woman sitting in the midst of the ephah."

Lead is only taken in a bad sense in Scripture, as being ponderous without value. "The sea covered them, they *sank as lead* in the mighty waters:" Ex. xv, 10. Now to sink like a mill-stone is the doom of Babylon, as presented to us both in the Old Testament and the New: Rev. xviii, 21; Jer. li, 64.

I gather then, the meaning of this to be, that first, the form of iniquity in its latter-day shape is presented to the prophet: and then the animating principle of it is disclosed to him, as a woman seated within it. This is, I conceive, nothing less than "*the mystery of iniquity*" for a moment revealed to the prophet's eye: that iniquity, which, in the days of Paul, was already working. And I understand a double meaning to attach to the lifting up the leaden load: first with reference to the Woman herself, that there should be a momentary alleviation of that just judgment of God which lay upon her: and secondly, with regard to the

prophet and the people of God, that during that time of the alleviation of her judgment, she would fully stand revealed ; and iniquity would then be no longer in mystery, but be openly manifested to the eye of the saint as depicted in the word of God.

By the Woman's sitting within the ephah, is intended habitual residence : Luke i, 79. The ephah is her tabernacle, in which she dwells, as God did in the tabernacle of the wilderness : Ex. xxix, 45, 46. To the people of Christ it is commanded to come out from iniquity, and be separate from it ; but she makes it *her dwelling-place*. "To dwell in the tents of *wickedness*," is a thing disallowed of the Psalmist (Psa. lxxxiv, 10), but chosen by her. Wickedness in the midst of the world's ephah, shows that the very standard of justice is corrupted (Micah vi, 10, 11) and that, as Solomon says, "I saw under the sun, *the place of judgment, that wickedness was there* ; and the *place of righteousness, that iniquity was there* : " Eccl. iii, 16.

She is seated "*in the midst of the ephah*," not "*on*" it. This marks her as being in the transition state, which the present vision describes. For I am persuaded that by the Woman is meant Rome, and that the vision of the ephah predicts a removal of Rome to the literal Babylon on the Euphrates. Thus regarded, we can trace her as seated at each of the extreme points of her journey, while this vision presents her in her passage from the one fixed point to the other. In Rev. xvii, 9, we get the Woman in her *present position*, as seated *on* the seven hills. "The seven heads are seven mountains *on* which the Woman *sitteth*." (ἐπι) In Zech. v, 11, we have her seated once more. "It shall be established and set there *upon her own base*." (ἐπι) But in the course of her passage, she is distinguished by being seated "*in the midst of the ephah*."

The Woman, I judge to be the same that is presented to us as the Great Harlot of the Apocalypse : and the same that is seen in the parable of the Leaven, as hiding the leaven in the midst of the three measures of meal. In Revelation we see her sitting and carried as here ; she leaves behind her her present mountains, for

she changes her place ; she "*goes forth*." But she keeps her iniquity, and is still "Wickedness : " and therefore the heavy weight of God's judgment lies upon her head, and abides with her till it is accomplished. The ephah in which she sits is now empty of its meal, for her rule is gone from her, though her principles remain the same.

"And he said, This is WICKEDNESS."

It may be also translated, "This is the Wicked Woman." She answers to Antichrist, (who is הרשע) as his counterpart (הרשעה) just as the Lord Jesus and His bride answer to each other, as the Just One, and the Justified. She is the city supported by Antichrist, as the New Jerusalem is the city in which the glory of the Lamb will abide.

"And he cast her (אתה) into the midst of the ephah."

This action of the angel's denotes displeasure. We cast away from us that which is defiled, as it was commanded of the leprous stones (Lev. xiv, 40) ; that which is hateful and unpleasing, as it is written, "I will cast you out of my sight as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim : " Jer. vii, 15. It is also characteristic of punishment, as the offender cast with a *weight about his neck* into the sea : Luke xvii, 2 ; the adulteress "cast into a bed : " Rev. ii, 22 ; and Satan cast out of heaven : Rev. xii, 9 ; xiv, 19 ; xvii, 21 ; xx, 3.

"And he cast the stone (אבן) of lead upon the mouth thereof."

To lay a burden upon any were a trouble and annoyance to them : Acts xv, 28. But this is a "*stone cast*" upon her ; and that is far more.

(1.) A stone is spoken of as heavy, and sinking : Ex. xv, 5 ; Neh. ix, 11 ; Prov. xxvii, 3 ; Zech. xii, 3 ; and even thus is Babylon to sink. (2.) It is described as a deadly weapon, when cast on a person : Ex. xxi, 18 ; Num. xxxv, 23. (3.) And thirdly, as God's just and legal punishment annexed to the (a) sorcerer :

Lev. xx, 27 ; Rev. xviii, 23. (b) The idolater : Deut. xiii, 10 ; xvii, 5 ; Rev. ix, 20. And (c) the whore and adulteress : Deut. xxii, 21, 23, 24 ; Rev. xvii, 1 ; John viii, 5, 7. This is then the first stone thrown at the adulteress, and that not by evil men, but by an angel of God. We gather then, that the Woman is hateful to God, and from the kind of punishment inflicted on her by one of the just angels of God, we learn what her crimes are, and understand her to be a sorceress, an idolater, and a whore. In all these characters she corresponds with the Babylon of the Apocalypse.

Lastly, stones cast from on high demonstrated and inflicted the wrath of God against the Canaanites : Josh. x, 11 ; Ezek. xiii, 13. And while to fall upon a stone is injurious, to have a stone fall on us, is spoken of as grinding to powder : Luke iv, 11 ; Matt. xxi, 44.

The Woman before us then, is represented as "*bearing her iniquity*." She is the Woman on whom the burden is laid by God ; and that is Babylon ; as it is written : Isa. xiii, 1, "*The burden of Babylon*." The stone also, being a stone of lead, and therefore, so much the heavier, manifests the ponderous weight of God's wrath lying above her head. The stone of lead lying, "on the mouth of the ephah," signifies her guilt. Similar was the situation of the five kings at Makkedah in Joshua's day of victory. When they hid in a cave, he commanded a stone to be rolled to its mouth, that there might be no escape for them, but that when the battle was concluded, they might be brought forth to their just doom. And such, I doubt not, is its sense here. The stone upon the ephah's mouth cuts off escape.

"Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came forth two women, and the wind was in their wings ; for they had wings like the wings of a stork : and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven."

The Woman being the city of Rome, the two Women that carry her, are two cities also, and their going forth being described by the same word as hers, denotes that the inhabitants of two other cities will leave their present abodes, as well as herself. What cities the two are, it would be difficult to say. But whatever the

names of the two cities, they are evil in God's sight : for they bear iniquity and it is written, "Woe unto them that *draw iniquity with cords of vanity* : " Isa. v, 18. And these bear the ephah of wickedness through the power of the wind.

"The wind was in their wings." Or, it may be, "The *Spirit* was in their wings."

1. It could be no good spirit that could lift up evil, but it might be "the spirit of the world," "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

2. If we take it of the *wind*, this is no good sign. She is then like "chaff carried before the wind : " Psa. xxxv, 5. The wind is the inheritance of the wicked : and while *God* is against her, this is the chief thing in her favour : Prov. xi, 29. It seems to show her engaged on Satan's errand, for he is the "Prince of the Power of the air : " Eph. ii, 2 ; Job i, 19. And the disciples of Jesus found the wind *contrary*, while she experiences it *in her favour* : Matt. xiv, 24 ; Acts xxvii, 4.

3. The carrying away by the wind is a curse : "Terrors take hold upon him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the *night*. *The east wind carrieth him away and he departeth* ; and a storm hurleth him out of his place. For God shall *cast upon him, and not spare* : *he would fain flee out of his hand* : " Job xxvii, 20, 22 ; Isa. xli, 16 ; lvii, 13 ; lxiv, 6 ; Job xxx, 22. To be smitten by a stone and carried away by the wind, is the doom of the great image : Dan. ii, 35.

4. If we take the wind figuratively, it is a "wind of doctrine : " Eph. iv, 14. And to be as a cloud borne by winds, is the doom of the latter-day apostates : Jude xii. Thus, in every view of it, it is only evil.

The wings of the Women were "like stork's."

1. This adds to the proof of their being evil ; for the stork was an unclean bird, an "abomination : " Lev. xi, 19 ; Deut. xiv, 8. It was so as a bird of prey.

2. The wings of a stork are spotted, black and white. And spots are emblems of sin : Jer. xiii, 23.

3. The stork is a bird highly esteemed among men

for piety, whence it takes its name. (החסידה) Hence these cities will have much repute for piety, but in God's sight be unclean, as covetous and rapacious. It is fit that unclean birds should bear the unclean seed to its native soil.

4. But the point most important is, that the stork is a *bird of passage, sojourning in Europe during the summer, but in winter betaking itself to the warmer climes of the east, whence it first came forth.* This peculiarity is noted in the prophets. "Yea, the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming:" Jer. viii, 7. Hence I gather, that at this period, Rome will find Europe cold to her, and to escape its bitter wintry blasts, she will travel to the warmer climes of the east, even to Babylon, where the stork naturally abides. The stork is fond of cities and of ruins; and this intimates to us how fitting Babylon will be, as both a city and a ruin, for the place of her nest. The occasion of Rome's leaving Europe for Asia, will, it appears, be the calamity inflicted on it by the ten kings, even its destruction by burning. The passage which we are now considering, is that of the remnant who escape from that awful blow.

"And they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven."

1. This action of theirs denotes their care to exalt her. "He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways; they shall *bear thee up* in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone:" Psa. xi, 11, 12.

2. It signifies their delight in her. "Ye *took up* (נשאתם) the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan:" Acts vii, 43; x, 16. This is the time of the wilderness, and beside each other now, the tabernacle of witness and the tabernacle of Moloch are borne by their respective priests.

3. But her being lifted up between earth and heaven, manifests her to be under the curse. For this was the position of Jesus when on the cursed tree. This was

the position of Absalom, the accursed of God. "The mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth:" 2 Sam. xviii, 9.

"Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar; and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base."

It will be by the conveyances of these two cities that the relics of Rome will be carried to Babylon, whether that mode be ships (as the mention of "the wind" might seem to suggest), or some other. But their good offices do not cease when they have conveyed her thither. They proceed to build her an house in the land of Shinar.

1. Two women built the house of Israel: Ruth iv, 11. Two women built the house of iniquity. It is not built of God, and therefore in vain: "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it" (Psa. cxxvii, 1), and there is a woe against such as do it "by wrong:" Jer. xxii, 14; Hab. ii, 12.

2. It is a proof of their disbelief of judgment being near at hand. "These are the men that devise mischief and give wicked counsel in this city: which say, *It is not near, let us build houses:*" Ezek. xi, 2, 3; Luke xvii, 28.

3. Babel was the place where iniquity first began to build after the flood. The judgment of God compelled men to leave off (Gen. xi) but they will finish now what was then begun. For this is the time of the dominion of iniquity, and of Antichrist as its great head and patron. During the present time, it is in mystery, iniquity "walking in a tent and in a tabernacle," but then it will be iniquity set on high on its own lofty basis of pride and power. These Women are, as it were, bearers of the ark of iniquity, its Levites or priests, and they bear it on till, like Solomon, they have found it a resting-place.

Its place is significant. Its resting-place is in the "land of Shinar," which was the beginning of the kingdom of the rebel-hunter Nimrod, fit type of the last and mightiest king, who will do according to his will: Gen. x, 9, 10. It was the place of earth's luxury from

the first; and a "goodly Babylonish garment," ('garment of Shinar') was Satan's bait to Achan—troubling the camp of Israel: Josh. vii, 21. It was the place of Judah's enemies, the place of the defilement of the temple vessels, and of blasphemy against the true God. Whither then could iniquity be so appropriately carried, as thither, where offences so heinous and typical of the future have been committed?

"And it shall be established."

This is a promise concerning Jerusalem also: but mark the difference! Jerusalem shall be established "*in righteousness*:" Isa. liv, 14. But iniquity can only be established by iniquity, and a woe lies against its being so established: Hab. ii, 12.

"And set there upon her own base." הניחה. More accurately, "It shall be caused to rest upon her own base."

It is a worldly rest (Luke xii, 19), not *God's* rest, which is promised to Israel: "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest:" Exod. xxxiii, 14; 2 Chron. xv, 15. It is a vain confidence of security, which will be no defence against descending judgment.

The ephah is to be established upon its own base. "*Its own*," this marks it as quite distinct from God's. Each one turning to *his own* way, notes man as walking in his sinfulness. So iniquity set on her own basis, must be built up in the place of iniquity. Now the place of iniquity in the land of Shinar is assuredly Babylon. The expression denotes its arrival at length at a place *congenial* to it. Thus we read concerning the house of God, that the chief of Israel offered liberally for it, "to set it up *in his place*:" Ezra ii, 68. This of course could only be in Jerusalem, the congenial and promised spot. Thus also we read in the days of Solomon when the temple was finished that, "The priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord *into its place*:" 1 Kings viii, 6.

The expression denotes also the spot of former residence. "Jacob said unto Laban, send me away that I may go away to *mine own place*, and to my

country:" Gen. xxx, 25. "And Laban departed, and returned *unto his place*:" Gen. xxxi, 55.

Similarly in the restoration of the temple, and its vessels and services after the captivity, we read: "Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, *builded the altar* of the God of Israel And they set the altar *upon his bases*:" Ezra iii, 2, 3.

The vision then describes iniquity during the time of mystery, and just before the time of manifestation. The ephah of unrighteousness is *away from its base* now: but it will one day be restored thither. Though Sodom was beaten down, yet a cutting of its vine still remains to poison the earth with its venomous juices: Deut. xxxii, 32. And thus, though Babylon be desolate, and the iniquity that began there be removed from its old locality, yet it is destined to return thither, and in its native soil to display all its rankness. *While iniquity is away from its base, it is iniquity in mystery.* But once returned, its house is built; it is settled, no more to be moved till judgment crush it: it is expanded, and its manifestation is to meet and receive the full wrath of God.

We see again in this vision, what St. Paul may mean by the words "*he who hinders*," and "*that which hinders*." (το κατεχον and ο κατεχων.) We have here a *double* hindrance. *The angel* as the *person*, and the *talent of lead* as the *thing*. When that is removed, she is displayed; when that is cast upon her, she is enclosed and confined.

I believe, therefore, that this vision is intended to foretell the transplantation of the relics of Rome to Babylon, after the city is burnt by the ten confederate kings of Antichrist. It predicts the last development of the iniquity which began in Babylon, and foretells that it will display itself on its old site. The vision was given to the prophet after the captivity. And that some *Western City** is meant, is apparent from the nature of the case. The prophet, situated in the land of Israel, sees two Women bearing an ephah towards Shinar, with the wind in their favour. They are travel-

* Isaiah xxi, 1. I translate, "The burden of *the desert of the west*." ים.

ling East, therefore they must have come *from the West*. And if any will take a map, they will see that a line drawn from Rome to Babylon would bring the Women within sight of the land of Israel. But having thus considered its exposition somewhat minutely, I would compare together this flight of the Woman in Zechariah, with the flight of another Woman in Rev. xii.

The two Women are not only distinct from each other, but actually opposed to each other—as the city of *man* is to the city of *God*. The Woman of Rev. xii is, as I assume, Jerusalem, and the chapter in question describes her flight, that is, the flight of her remnant, into the wilderness.

With this view, it will be found that the account given in the vision of the Woman in heaven will agree. For she is covered with all heavenly glory, “clothed with the *sun*, and the *moon* under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve *stars*.” Now these are the three different kinds of celestial glories. For “There is *one* glory of the *sun*, and *another* glory of the *moon*, and *another* glory of the *stars* :” 1 Cor. xv, 41. But all these glories are connected with the *posterity* of Abraham, as to the *persons* ; and with the *city* of *Jerusalem* as the *place* of manifestation. With the *persons*—as we see in Joseph’s dream. “The *sun* and the *moon* and *eleven stars* (not ‘*the eleven*’) made obeisance to me :” Gen. xxxvii, 9. So also in Abraham’s blessing, “I will multiply thy seed as the *stars* of the heaven :” Gen. xxii, 17. And the other two glories of the heaven are added in Moses’ blessing of Joseph : Deut. xxxiii, 14. God gives the security of the ordinances of heaven in the sun’s ruling the day and the moon and stars the night, as the strong assurance that His promises to Israel shall be fulfilled ; and that too, in the very place where the New Covenant (mentioned in the Hebrews) is put forth : Jer. xxxi, 35, 37.

But the sun, moon, and stars are also seen in connection with Israel, and especially with Jerusalem, in our Lord’s prophecy on the Mount of Olives. “*Jerusalem shall be trodden down* of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled.” “And there shall be signs

in the *sun*, and in the *moon*, and in the *stars*” (Luke xxi, 24, 25) ; thus do the heavenly bodies in their darkening and change sympathize with the earthly city of God in its tribulation. But when her glory comes, they too are glorious. “The Redeemer shall come to Zion. Arise, shine ; *for thy light is come*, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” Also in this prophecy the sun and moon are both specified as belonging to Jerusalem. “*Thy sun* shall no more go down, neither shall *thy moon* withdraw itself :” Isa. lx, 1, 20.

But what is meant specially by the sun, the moon, and the twelve stars, as connected with Jerusalem ? I understand by the emblems here made use of, that Jerusalem has been glorified by God in the three preceding dispensations, and that it will be seen glorified by them all combined in the latter day. By the crown of twelve stars—(that “*incorruptible crown*”) I understand the twelve patriarchs, as we find them pointed out to us in Joseph’s dream, himself making the twelfth. These were *descendants* of Abraham, and their glory is therefore that of the stars. They are *signal descendants* of Abraham, and therefore twelve stars pre-eminent above the rest. By the moon I understand the Law ; for, as the moon shines only by *reflected light*, so is the law indebted for all that it has of glory to its being a shadowing forth of the Lord Jesus. And thus Paul compares them. It was glorious as seen in the bright countenance of Moses, but that glory was to be done away ; and if so, “how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be *rather glorious* ?” “For if the ministration of condemnation be *glory*, much more doth the ministration of righteousness *exceed in glory*. For even that which was *glorious*, had no glory in this respect, by *reason of the glory that excelleth* :” 2 Cor. iii, 8, 11. That is, then, in other words, to affirm that while the law had some glory, it stands related to the glory of the Gospel but as the moon to the sun. For the law had only “the shadow of the good things to come,” as the moon bears only the light of the sun. The sun with which the Woman is clothed, is I suppose the Lord Jesus, “the Sun of righteousness” (Mal. iv, 2)—the centre of

the Gospel. "The Lord God is *a sun*:" Psal. lxxxiv, 11. Hence our Lord was seen at the transfiguration and on high, having his face shining as the sun: Matt. xvii, 2; Acts xxvi, 13; Rev. i, 16.

The city Jerusalem then has been glorified under the three dispensations of—(1) the Patriarchs—(2) the Law—and (3) the Gospel. (1) Under the Patriarchal dispensation, we see it as the city of Melchizedec, who blesses Abraham. (2) Under the Law, as the favoured city of the temple, the spot where God's name was placed, and whither the tribes went up, and the feasts were held. (3) Under the Gospel it was glorified still, as the place of Jesus' teaching and miracles, and the resurrection, and the first centre in which the church of Christ bore witness before an ungodly world, and the Spirit descended in love and power.

Thus the three different glories of the Patriarchal dispensation, the Law, and the Gospel, all meet in Jerusalem, and they are represented by the three differing celestial glories, the sun, the moon, and the stars.

Compare now with this picture of the Woman irradiated with all orders of heavenly glory, the Woman of Rev. xvii, and we see at once that she is emblazoned with the glory of *man* only: with "purple and scarlet colour, decked with gold and precious stones and pearls;" these being glories forbidden now (1 Tim. ii, 9); whence I gather that thus we find the city of God in contrast with the city of man.

And when we take a view of Babylon in relation to the three dispensations now noted, we shall see as marked a contrast as in the respective origin and destiny of the two cities.

(1.) In the Patriarchal dispensation, we see Babylon as the city of the first type of Antichrist (Gen. x); and as the spot where the first combination against God arose after the flood (Gen. xi.)

(2.) Under the Law, we find Babylon first introducing by stealth her leaven into the camp, through Achan's sin in the matter of the "goodly Babylonish garment" (Josh. vii); and afterwards treading down captive Israel and carrying away the spoils of the temple to its worthless idol-fanes. And wherever we find it, it still appears as

the antagonist of Jerusalem. It is exalted of God just when Israel is to be brought low: it is brought low when Israel and Jerusalem are to be exalted. When the kingdom is Solomon's, he rules as far as Euphrates, and the adjoining kings are tributary. When Hezekiah sins, the sceptre of Babylon is threatened as the scourge of God. (Isa. xxxix.) When Zedekiah has filled up the measure of Judah's sin, Nebuchadnezzar burns the temple, and carries captive the Jews. But again when Babylon is conquered, the decree for the rebuilding of Jerusalem goes forth, and the place of empire is transferred from Babylon to Shushan.

(3.) *But where is Babylon now?* Surely here the argument is at fault! Nay, during the time of *mystery*—while the "*mystery of iniquity*" is working, "*Babylon the Great*" is in *mystery* too. There is a restraint on the *city of iniquity*, while there is a restraint upon *iniquity itself*. The head and the members are made to sympathize together. The place of *Babylon mystic* during the "*mystery of God*" is *Rome*. For what is the spot to which the Gentile power of Babylon was transferred? All will confess, to Rome. *And Rome has appeared as the city that aided in crucifying the Lord Jesus, and in burning and trampling Jerusalem and its temple, and carrying captive the vessels of the temple, and the relics of the fallen nation.* Moreover she has ever since been seen as the corrupter of Christianity; thus in each great feature answering to *Babylon*. In its moral characteristics, Rome is Babylon. But it is Babylon *away from its place*—the altar away from its base. In no way, therefore, can it be properly described in reference to Babylon of old, than as the *mystic* Babylon. Both Babylon the literal and Babylon mystic existed when the Gospel went forth, and it is deeply interesting to see that the Apostle of the circumcision and of the *letter* is sent to *literal Babylon* (1 Pet. v, 13,) and the Apostle of the Gentiles, the teacher of "*the mystery*," is sent to *mystic Babylon* or *Rome*: Acts xxiii, 11; xxviii. We take leave of each of these Apostles at these places respectively. At Rome we see the Jews finally cast

off as a nation by the ministry of Paul; and the Gentiles taken in. And Peter's epistle we find directed to set forth the *apostacy of the present dispensation among the Gentiles*. And as the Apocalypse is, in few words, the description of the passing away of the time of mystery existing at present, and the bringing in the manifestation of the sons of God, it *touches both extremes*. It begins, assuming the present position of mystery in which we find ourselves: and it ends describing the blessed light of the millennium, and the glory that lies even beyond that. Thus there is a *double presentation of Babylon in the Revelation*. We have *first Babylon in mystery* (xvii); and *secondly, Babylon literal* (xviii). Babylon mystic is seen as the *woman*; Babylon literal, as the *city*. And hence there is also a *double announcement of Babylon's overthrow*: the first, the human overthrow of mystic Babylon or Rome, which is noted (Rev. xiv, 8) just after the warning against the atheist delusions of that day, in which the ten atheist kings arise; and just before the threat of the third angel, that the vials of God's wrath shall be poured out. But the second overthrow of Babylon, which is divine, occurs at the last vial, and this takes effect on Babylon literal, or the city. In the day of apostacy from the Christian faith, Rome, as holding any portion of Christianity, will be obnoxious to the atheist spirit then abroad, and the ten kings uniting, will burn the city. The remnant of its inhabitants flee to Babylon on the Euphrates, and make it the great commercial city and centre of the world, and in its new form Antichrist can take pleasure in it, and will be king of Babylon. For, as during the time of mystery, both Jerusalem and Babylon have been trodden down, so in the time of apostacy, Babylon will be rebuilt: as in the time of Israel's apostacy, Jericho, the city of the curse, was rebuilt: 1 Kings xvi, 34. And thus will be centred in that city, the relics of Rome, and the iniquity of Antichrist. And as iniquity began on the banks of Euphrates in man's first fall, was displayed there again at the building of Babel, and at the time of Belshazzar's feast of blasphemy,

so will iniquity be finally judged there. There will iniquity, that long has been smouldering, break forth into open flame, and display itself openly and broadly. The iniquity of the East and the West will there unite: and when Rome comes to Babylon, the altar of sin will be set upon its true base, and iniquity be fully manifested. Concerning her power then to corrupt the world see Jer. li. There are the Jews found also, and they and their land and temple are oppressed by her: Micah iv, Zech. ii. While the *spiritual Israel* are gathering, mystic, *spiritual Babylon* is before God. When the *literal Israel* are restored to their land, *literal Babylon* is seen again. Jerusalem and Babylon are the two great cities of the Apocalypse, and the literality of the one infers that of the other: Rev. xi, 8; xiv, 8. Jerusalem has been destroyed, and will be rebuilt. Babylon has been destroyed, and will be rebuilt (as Zion will) on *the return of her king*. For the king of Jerusalem died and lives again: and of the king of Babylon it is said (in words true of his city also) "*he was, and is not, and shall be present.*"

But to return. Jerusalem also is seen in this double aspect. First she appears as the *city*, or *Jerusalem literal* (Rev. xi.) Next, as the *Woman*, or *Jerusalem mystic* (Rev. xii.) She only appears as the Woman when away (like Babylon) from her true place, and driven into the wilderness by the usurpation of Antichrist. Thus, the meaning of Babylon's appearing both literally and mystically, is confirmed.

This point is susceptible of yet fuller confirmation. The new Jerusalem, no less than the old, is presented to us both as a *woman* and a *city*. First, she appears as "*the bride,*" i.e. the *city away from her place, and during the period of mystery*. "*The marriage of the Lamb is come and his wife hath made herself ready:*" xix, 7.

Next, we have the earthly Jerusalem spoken of literally as the beloved *city*, because she is inhabited once more *in her place*: xx, 7.

Then we have the New Jerusalem as the "*city*" "*like a bride adorned for her husband,*" but called by the name of a city—"The Holy City, the *New Jerusalem*:"

xxi, 2. Here she is the city, because arrived *at her place on the new earth* after the millennium is over.

The angel then promises to show John "the *bride*, the Lamb's wife:" xxi, 9. And John then sees "the great city, the holy *Jerusalem*," and describes it literally (xxi, 10), its luminary (*φωσστηρ*), its wall, gates, foundation, streets, river, tree of life, and its healing leaves. By this double description of the city, we may, I think, understand it to be holding its *intermediate place during the millennium*. It has come down from God into the air, and so is partly in its place; but it is not yet on the new earth, and, therefore, is not seen wholly literally, but as "the bride."

It is then presented twice beside as the "city," the *final place of abode of the justified on the new earth*, and therefore literal: xxii, 14, 15, 18, 19. And between these intimations, it is once spoken as "*the bride*," in connection with the church for desire of the return of the Lord Jesus, for this manifests it to be during *the time of mystery, and away from its sphere*.

And now a word or two on the other points of analogy in the two visions. As the Woman of ch. xii is the city of God, so her *hindrances are from Satan*, and her help from God. As on the other hand, the Woman of ch. xvii (or the Woman of Zechariah) is the city of man, her *help is from Satan, her doom from God*.

Thus the Harlot is carried, in Zechariah, by two Women; and in the Revelation, is borne by the Wild Beast. But the heavenly Woman finds Satan ready to devour her child, and it is defended by angelic hosts.

The heavenly Woman has "eagles' wings" given to her by God. The earthly Woman is borne by those having the wings of a stork. The heavenly Woman has to flee for life into the wilderness. The earthly is carried to the most fertile spot of earth, and sits calmly in the ephah as her chariot. The one is assisted by Satan's power, the wind; the other is pursued by the dragon. ● On the one a talent of lead is heaved by a commissioned angel of God. Against the other, a river of water is poured forth by Satan. Jerusalem is nourished as of old, by God in the wilderness. The other has a house

built and established by Women in Shinar. For the true Woman a place is "prepared" of God; for the false the ephah is established on its own base.

Lastly, hostile invasion is, as we suppose, the cause both of the flight of the one and of that of the other. But the flight of the one is to the wilderness, the place foretold and provided of God for her retreat and blessing: Isa. xliii, 19, 20; Ezek. xx, 35, 36; Hos. ii, 14. The other is fleeing to the city of the curse, from whence, if she had the eye of faith, she would at once turn aside; for God calls on all that believe his word to "flee out of Babylon:" Isa. xlviii, 20; Jer. l, 8; li, 6.

Concerning the double fate of Babylon, I have already spoken in part, but I would say a few more words at the close. The destruction of Babylon mystical is by the hand of man; "the ten kings which thou sawest, *and** the Wild Beast burn her with fire." But of the destruction of the city we read, that it is by the hand of the Lord; and the saints are called on to re-pay her double: Rev. xviii, 6. The literal city is to be cast down like a mill stone, and to be found no more at all: ver. 21. And the smoke, unlike that of any burning at the hand of man, goes up for ever: xix, 3. In *one hour* is it to be destroyed; which would answer to the effect of an earthquake and fiery eruption from below, both in the suddenness of the blow, the fire, and the continual smoke. At the first overthrow—that of the Woman by the ten kings, there is no mourning; the *ruling* city falls, and no one would hinder. But when the *commercial* city falls, there is great mourning among kings and merchants, and shipowners; and contrasted with it is joy in heaven. The last calamity being immediately from the hand of God is final, and the angel chants the funeral dirge of the city. The Wild Beast or Antichrist nowhere appears in the second instance, for he meets his doom away from Babylon, at Jerusalem.

The xvii chapter which describes mystical Babylon, deals almost wholly with symbols: the whore, heads, a cup, wine, fornication, drunkenness, harlots, waters.

* *Kai* is the true reading: not *επι*. See Scholtz, Griesbach, and Tregelles.

But in chapter xviii. the whole is (so far as I can see) a literal account of the wares of a great trading city. Kings, merchants, and ship owners, are literally presented. In this chapter there is no mention of "the seven heads," or even of mountains, and the present explanation accounts for it; for it is the literal Babylon which is here dealt with, and that is situated in a plain.

In chapter xvii we see her power to be that of pageantry and false doctrine, supported by a close alliance with the sovereigns of the earth. But in chapter xviii we see only the influence of commerce. I suppose then that the remnant escaping from Rome, will embrace the faith of Antichrist (for none may buy or sell except those that have stamped themselves with his mark), and therefore her cup of false doctrine being stricken out of her hand, she becomes simply commercial. The world is caught at last in its Sodom state of godless wealth; their hearts overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and the day comes upon them unawares.

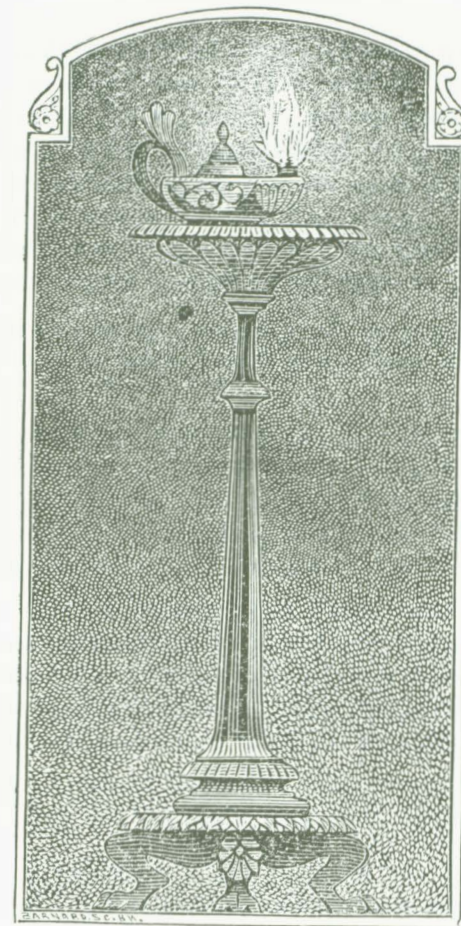
Of the double calamity here supposed, Sodom was, I apprehend, a type. First, she is carried captive by a *confederacy of kings*. But recovering from this, she returns to her old site. And then *vengeance in the form of fire from God* finally destroys her.

Lastly, there is even now a connection between Rome and Babylon. The literal Babylon is the seat of a Roman Catholic Archbishop appointed by the Pope. And if I mistake not, it is mentioned in history, that at one point of extreme depression and calamity in the Roman annals, it was actually proposed to the Pope, by one of the cardinals, to remove to Babylon.

Perhaps we may see a type of this vision of Zechariah, in the carrying of Achan (properly "*Achor*," 1 Chron. ii, 7) with his forbidden and accursed goods to the valley of *Achor*, and there burning him with fire; and thus iniquity is purged out of the troubled camp. So Babylon, the Woman, is seen borne to Babylon, the city, with the ephah of her wickedness enclosing her: and "*she shall be utterly burned with fire*, for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her."

THE LAMP AND ITS STAND.

Fourth Edition.



THE LAMP AND ITS STAND.

In ancient days the house was lighted in a different way from our modern times. The plate at the commencement exhibits the manner in which ancient dwellings were ordinarily lit. A small hand-lamp when intended to give permanent light, was set upon a stand, similar to that represented in the engraving. To this the Savior four times alludes.* On the first of these occasions he expresses himself as follows:—

“Neither do men light a lamp, † and put it under the bushel, § but upon the lamp-stand, ‡ and it giveth light to all that are in the house:”—*Matthew v, 16.*

In the preceding verses of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is speaking of believers being a light to the world; intended to discover to men the character of God and the kind of life which God approves. He compares them to a city on a hill, that cannot be hid.

It was desired by the Lord Jesus, that his disciples should bear testimony to the truth by their lips and their lives. In confirmation of this wise design, he appeals to men's conduct in their use of the lamp, as a beautiful analogy, setting forth his meaning.

Let us a moment trace it. Every man is, as it were, a lamp. But the ungodly man is a useless lamp—he

* *Matt. v, 15; Mark iv, 21; Luke viii, 16; xi, 33.*

† *Λυχνον.* § *Τον μωδιον*, because there was ordinarily but one bushel-basket in the house.—*Bishop Middleton.* ‡ *Την λυχνιαν.* So but *one* lamp stand.

has no oil within; he is a *lamp unlit*. He is dark himself, and gives no light to others. But God's intent, in bringing men into this world, is, that they should serve him and do good to others. The lamp should be put to its purpose: for the world is in darkness; the time is night.* Oil is poured into it, and when it is lit its use begins. The light comes from without; the lamp does not light itself. So the Holy Spirit first kindles the love of God in the dark and dead bosom of man, and pours in grace divine. A new life is then begun in the man. *The lamp is lit.*

But what was the intent of the man who lighted it? What end did he design in so doing? To give light to himself and others in the absence of the sun. The next inquiry, therefore is, How may that purpose be best fulfilled. To fix our mind on this, the Lord observes, first, the place where he does *not* set it; and secondly, where he *does*. There are spiritual lessons in both.

He does *not* put it beneath a bushel-basket. This he knows, would in a great measure defeat the very end of his lighting it. He wants light; the more of it the better. But to put it under that vessel of wicker-work would shut out its rays, and but a few stray beams would escape through the crannies and chinks of the basket. With such a scanty light, he could neither write nor read.

Nor does he put the light into a vault;† for that being not a human habitation, its light would be spent unprofitably. It would be of no service to the bats or spiders; and it is needed by men. *The lamp then is lighted, not for its own sake, but for the sake of the master and those in the house.*

Thus when a sinner is changed in heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, God does not design that his feelings of love and joy, his acts of obedience and ser-

* Rom. xiii, 12; 1 Thess. v, 2—7.

† Εἰς κρυπτήν.—See Bloomfield, on Luke xi, 33.

vice, should be concealed. He does not desire that the newly-lighted soul should seek to hide from its fellows the fresh affections and purposes that have sprung up within. He is not to keep quiet within his own bosom the truth that he is now a son of God, and a servant of Jesus Christ. His closet is not to be the only place where he confesses the Savior. The lamp is not for the vault, nor designed to be hid by the bushel-basket. Nor was his enlightening for himself alone. He is to be a testimony to others; a witness for Him that lit him. By his example and his words he is to teach others the way to peace and glory.

But what is done with the lighted lamp? It is not set on the floor; for the shadows would then be flung upward, and partially darken the room. Then, too, it would be perpetually in danger of being overturned by the feet of those passing by. A place is beforehand prepared for it. Men, finding the unsuitableness of the lamp to stand alone, because of its insignificant stature and its great liability to be upset, provided a special piece of furniture for its reception; tall enough to enable it to stand nearly on a level with themselves, and weighty enough to prevent its being overthrown and extinguished by a blow. This was the lamp-stand, and here the lit lamp was set. From this point its rays would stream most commodiously; and from it, as a centre, would flow light sufficient for those that would employ themselves in reading, or in plying the needle, pencil, or pen.

Has not this also its spiritual lesson? The renewed soul is not designed of God to stand alone. The light of the believer is to shine before the world. But this is not all. There are those like-minded with himself, with whom he is to unite, that their joint testimony may the more attract the notice of the world.

The Savior, after his ascension, explains to us what he means by the lamp-stand. "The seven *lamp-stands* which thou sawest are the seven *churches*:" Rev. i, 20.

As man provides a place for the lighted lamp, so has God for the newly-enlightened soul. That place in which it is to be set, is the church of Christ. *There can he give men most light, and bring God most glory.*

The church is the soul's lamp-stand, constructed of God that the believer's testimony may be delivered thence with the greatest force, and best fulfil his design in regenerating him.

Reader, are you a lamp lighted, or a lamp unlit? Have you ever thought for what purpose you were made, and whether you are fulfilling that purpose? Are you born again of the Spirit of God? or are you only born flesh of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of nature, and living only to please yourself? O rest not, till you begin to fulfil the design for which God made you and sent you into the world, that you might shine to his glory, and to men's salvation!

Are you a believer? but one that has never joined any church of Christ? Do you say that you are afraid, lest you should, after putting your hand to the plough, draw back? Do you dread making a profession, lest you should afterwards disgrace it; and therefore think it best not to make any profession at all?

What think you, Christian? Which is the best place for us to take—*the one God has appointed*, or *that which we choose for ourselves*? Which is most prudent, to be guided by God's wisdom, or to follow our own councils?

You have seen this day, that the Lord has provided and constructed beforehand the place where he would have you be set. The Master thinks the lamp-stand the best place for the lamp. He considers that the light then serves him best. Dare you maintain an opposite opinion to that of the Lord Jesus?

And where is the lamp most *safely* placed? When set on the floor, and at the peril of every foot, or on the weighty stand? Where is the believer most likely

to be upheld—where saints are watching over him for good, where he has boldly taken his side, and where the ordinances of the Lord's appointment, and the exercises of prayer and praise, knit him to his fellow-believers?—or when standing alone?

Present duty, Christian, and not *future possibilities* are to be our guide. Even if a prophet could tell you, that after you have made a profession, you would fall as foully as Peter, your present duty would be the same, to join yourself *now* to the church of Christ.

But what is a church of Christ? you may ask. It is an assembly of *believers*, gathered to Jesus, as their Lord and Master, and standing separate from an evil world.

When Paul was at Ephesus we read, "But when divers were hardened *and believed not*, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them and *separated the disciples*:" Acts xix, 9; xvii, 2—5. Thus arose the church at Ephesus. "Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God to the *saints which are at Ephesus*, and the *faithful in Christ Jesus*." Eph. i, 1.

So long then, believer, as you are keeping apart from saints who constitute a church of Christ in your neighbourhood, you are away from the post in which your Lord and Savior would have you to be. Tarry there no longer. Fear not to avow yourself the Lord's! Hasten, saint, to fill your place in the church of God! THE LAMP TO ITS STAND!

WINE AND ITS BOTTLES;

OR

DOCTRINE AND RITES:

A TRUTH FOR THE TIMES.

Third Edition.

BY R. GOVETT.

WINE AND ITS BOTTLES;

OR

DOCTRINE AND RITES.

THE reply of our Lord to the disciples of John, when they proposed to Him a difficulty concerning fasting, is full of wisdom ; of great importance at all times to the Church of Christ, and especially to our own.

“The disciples of John and those of the Pharisees were fasting, and they came and say unto Him, ‘Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Thy disciples fast not?’ And Jesus said unto them, ‘Can the children of the bridechamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But days will come, when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.’”* Mark ii. 18—20 ; Matthew ix. 14, 15 ; Luke v. 33—35.

It is no wonder that such a question arose ; for Jesus’ doctrine professed to be an advance upon the Law of Moses, and John had spoken of the Saviour as far his superior. How was it then, that Jesus allowed His disciples to be less strict in religious duties than the disciples of John, or those of the Pharisees ?

* “In that day.”—*Tregelles*.

He answers, that the circumstances of the case made fasting then unbecoming to those instructed by Him. He was, as John had declared, "the Bridegroom;" and they were the Bridegroom's friends, in immediate attendance on Him. To them, His presence was joy; and therefore fasting, so suitable for seasons of grief and humiliation, was as unsuitable for them in their then present circumstances, as joyful feasting would have been for the disciples of John; now that their Master was imprisoned and in peril of life.

So far, all are agreed in their views of the Lord's words. On the meaning of the parables which follow there is considerable difference of opinion. Jesus proceeds to say—

"No one seweth on a patch of unfulled rag to an old garment; but if he do, the new addition taketh from the old, and a worse rent is the consequence."

The idea generally entertained concerning these words is, that in them the Saviour taught, that it was not well to lay too heavy a yoke of ceremonies on His disciples at first; lest they should be disgusted with their profession, and return to the world. But, on consideration, it will appear, that such cannot be the meaning.

1. Why were our Lord's disciples less able to bear fasting, had it been fitting, than those of John? Or, how were John's disciples, and those of the Pharisees, more inured to it, than those of Jesus? How long had John's ministry preceded that of Jesus? But six months! There could not then be the difference of time between the instructions and discipline of John's disciples, as compared with those of Jesus, that the one should be described as "the old," and the others as "the new."

2. Again, this idea makes the parables which follow quite unsuitable to the case supposed. It makes our Lord compare His disciples, who are supposed

tender from *inexperience* and the *newness* of their instruction, to cloth that had become tender by *age*.

3. It makes things of different kinds to be represented by the same signs or symbols. The *new patch* of cloth is supposed to represent rites or observances; the old cloth a *person*.

4. The parable of the bottles is made thus wholly destitute of propriety. For then it is imagined, that the new wine signifies *new rites or observances*, and the old bottles, *persons*. And thus the *inward* and *invisible* wine is made to represent the *outward* and *visible* rite!

Rightly to understand our Lord's words, we must know what is meant by the "old" and the "new." Here we must take God's view of oldness and of novelty. Now the Holy Spirit teaches, that the Law was the "old," and the Gospel the "new." The Law is called "*the old covenant*" (2 Cor. iii. 14), and "*the oldness of the letter*" as opposed to "*the newness of the Spirit*:" Rom. vii. 6. God Himself asserted its antiquity. "In that He saith, 'A *new covenant*,' He hath made the *first old*:" Heb. viii. 13.

The old garment, then, is the ritual commanded by Moses. The garment is something external, and characteristic of the man, as the ordinances of Moses were visible rites characteristic of the Jew. Those rites being now nearly two thousand years old, might well be called the old garment.

The Saviour's reply, then, may be exhibited thus. 'You perceive a difference between John's disciples and Mine. The one party are fasting now, and fast often. My disciples neither fast now, nor at other times. The difference is not unknown to me, nor unintentional. I do not desire that the difference should be removed.'

'Think not that I am only come to add a few fresh observances to the law of Moses—to require baptism as well as circumcision, and to add the rite of a supper to the passover. No; I am not come to sew a new

patch to the old garment—I came not to repair the breaches of the old garment, but to introduce a new. Your advice to me is in effect—‘Why not add a few new rites to those enjoined by Moses?’ My answer is—Because I would not do in spiritual things what you would not do in temporal. Were I to follow your advice, I should be like one who should sew a piece of unfulled rag to an old dress. You know what would be the result in this case. The two would not long remain in union. Where the whole of a garment is of *equal* strength and pliancy, its parts give or resist together, and as they bear the strain equally, they remain whole. But where the strain comes upon a dress of *unequal* strength, there the strong and stiff part resists that which the old and worn cannot. And the consequence is, that the older and weaker portion is torn away from the dress, by the very bonds that fastened the new to the old.’

‘It would be even thus, were I to accept your suggestion and introduce among the rites of Moses some fresh observances enjoined by Myself. The old and the new rites must in some cases come into conflict with each other, and the question would arise, Which is of superior authority, the old given by Moses, or the new enjoined by Jesus? In the struggle the two observances being of unequal strength, one must give way. By My disciples the new would be judged of superior importance; and they, retaining some chance fragments of the old law in conjunction with my enactments, would, by their want of uniformity, cause a greater schism in the garment of Moses, than at present exists, even under your own sets of Pharisees and Sadducees.’

For let us look at the question in the light of the observances introduced by the Pharisees. The Pharisees had done the very thing which Jesus was advised to do. They had added fresh laws and rites to those already given by Moses. The consequence was, that the laws of Moses and those of the Pharisees

came at times into collision. What then was the result? The command of Moses was compelled to give way: for the new patch was *stiffer* and more unyielding than the old and the issue was (as we learn from the Saviour’s heavy rebuke), “the word of God is made of none effect by your tradition.” Disobedience to Moses (figured by the rent in the old garment) was increased, by the very means supposed necessary to supplement his defects.

Here, then, we may learn God’s mind concerning some scenes transacting in the Church of England at this time.* The Puseyites are sewing a new patch of ceremonies upon the old garment already worn by the national establishment. What has been, and what will be, the result of this? It is declared in the parable. “A worse rent is the consequence.” They have introduced a greater schism into the Church of England than has ever been known. One party sides with them, and upholds the new patch. Another maintains the old and former state of things. The issue is a worse rent and schism, than that for which they professed to desire a cure. For the object of the new movement was professedly to repair the defects of the old garment.

Observe again, another common error rebuked hereby. It is thought by many,—it is asserted by the Church of England in her 20th and 34th Articles,—that every church is at liberty to add rites and ceremonies to those of Christ’s ordaining. But it is clear from this parable that Christ neither intended this, nor would permit it. He saw that such an intrusion of the new rites upon the old was the very cause of schism. He then that would sew on the new patch must bear the responsibility of the schism that ensues. He that intrudes the new rite is the schismatic, and not the saint who refuses the commands and traditions of men in the things of God.

But another evil still results. “And the piece from

* This was true, when the tract was first written.

the new agreeth not with the old." The Saviour calls the added piece "a patch of unbleached rag" (*επιβλημα ρακους αγναφου*). Every eye discerns at once a patch in a garment; and it is accounted a sign of poverty, and a token that the owner must be poor, and unable to afford a new one. There is an *internal* inconvenience attaching to the introduction of the new piece, which is at length fatal to the *well-being* of the garment. This had been noticed before. But even while the two hang together, before the inequality of the one and of the other ends in open rupture, the *look* of the patch offends, from the want of continuity, the difference of colour and of texture. "The new *agreeth* not with the old." That which is to meet the eye and please it, should be harmonious, one part answering to another. How much more is this the case in the things of religion! If it be thought worthy of regard that we should be dressed in a garment not patched, much less patched inharmoniously, how much more worthy of our consideration, that our religious services should not be an ill-advised medley caught up from different quarters, partly the commands of God, partly the traditions of men. If we were compelled to mend a torn garment, we could not hope to escape offending a tasteful eye, unless we had some of *the same cloth* wherewith to match it. Even then it were unsightly. But how much more so, if the addition were a shred of unfulled unbleached rag! But such must necessarily be the case with every attempt of man to mend the religion of God by adding new ceremonies of his own devising. *He has not God's loom*. He cannot manufacture cloth of the same texture and of the same pattern. God's purposes run on unbroken, and to an infinite mind there never can be wanting devices perfectly in harmony with all that has preceded. But when man draws near to patch the work of God, it is not, as it were, the taking a piece of the *former fabric*, but the sewing on a shred of *unfulled cloth*, itself needing to be bleached and

cleansed, ere ever it could be fit to meet the eye. Thus, then, the Saviour would warn us, how unharmonious to a spiritual eye must be every attempt to intrude the traditions of men upon the infinitely wise institutions of God. What is it but the mud-hut made to lean against the palace wall, or white-wash incrusting pillars of mottled marble! Had we spiritual eyesight, we should at once discern and be disgusted at the unbleached patch.

But we find a third and distinct view of the subject.

"Nor do men put new wine into old bottles of skin; if they do, the bottles tear, and the wine is poured out and the bottles perish. But they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved together."

The Saviour in His divine wisdom, is viewing the proposal made to Him from another point of view. Jesus had regarded it before as an introduction of some new rites into a body of old ones. He now considers the matter more profoundly, as containing the question of the relation of religious *rites* to religious *doctrines*.

Rites are the fitting expression of religious doctrines. Religion, as Jesus assumes, requires both a soul and a body. The soul of a religion is its *doctrines*; the body of a religion is its *rites*. Now man, as a being partly spiritual and partly material, needs a religion of two characters like himself. False is the theory of the Quakers, that a spiritual religion, like Christianity, needs no religious rites. It is as foolish as to say, that so ethereal a fluid as wine needs no vessel to keep it. *Rites* of religion contain, and express to the eye, the *doctrine* of the religion.

Jesus then implies, that He came, not as a restorer of the old doctrine of Moses, but as the introducer of a new doctrine and religion. He was the bearer of new wine, as shown in the Sermon on the Mount. Those present had suggested to Him the expediency of

retaining the old ceremonies of the law. But He would let them know, that such a proceeding would be spiritually foolish. It would be like the pouring of new wine into old bottles *of skin*—those being constantly in use in eastern countries.

What would be the effect of such conduct? New wine ferments, and out of its fermentation heat and gases arise, which swell the vessel of skin. If the skin be new, it gives with the increased pressure from within, and still retains the liquid. But if new wine, which has not ceased to ferment, be poured into old skins, these vessels having become rigid with age, do not sustain the increased pressure arising from the internal motions of the liquid, and it forces its way through, tearing the skin, spilling the wine, and making the bottles useless.

Thus doctrine is as active a principle among men as is wine. There must be a suitability between doctrine and the religious rites in use, as there must be between wine and the vessels which contain it; or else the doctrine will itself pass away. Thus the festivals of the god of wine were celebrated among the ancients, with wine-drinkings and all manner of boisterous sports and mirth, with noisy music, shouts, dances, drunkenness, and excesses of all kinds. Here the doctrine and its rites corresponded. But there would have been the most rooted antagonism between the two, had the Bacchanals been taught, while singing the praises of the god of wine, to drink only water, to move with funereal pace, in habits of black, singing only tragic and pathetic songs. In such a case, the rites would soon have been broken through, and remoulded to accord with the character of the god; or his worship would speedily have departed, and his rites ceased to be observed.

Now in the old covenant there was a divine accord between the doctrine and the rites. Jehovah was to Israel the God of earth, and especially of the land of Israel, and of the city and temple at Jerusalem. Hence His festivals were required to be observed at His chosen

city, and in connexion with His temple. They celebrated His deliverance of their nation out of Egyptian slavery; His gracious bestowal of the harvest, of the vintage, and all other fruits, at the close of the year. God gave Israel earthly blessings in return for obedience to His commands; and, as obedient, they were directed to rejoice and be thankful in the good land which God had given them, and in all the earthly blessings with which they had been encompassed. The ceremonies of Moses completely expressed the doctrines of Moses; and the suitability of the one to the other had been proved by the permanence of both for two thousand years. The more Israel drew near to the apprehension and acceptance of the doctrines of Moses, the more carefully did they observe the rites. And the more carefully they observed the rites, the more would they drink into the spirit of the law. It set them as a nation apart from all others; and thus no uncircumcised person might partake of the passover.

But these rites were not suited to express the new doctrine of the Saviour. Jesus came to introduce a religion which was to make men strangers and pilgrims here, and to lead them out of earth into heaven. It was a religion which would throw them into collision with an evil world, and bring them into much persecution and sorrow, as the 15th verse had intimated. It was a religion not designed for Israel as a nation, and was unconfined by any limitation to Jerusalem, or its temple—it was truth and salvation thrown open to all nations of the earth. Hence, had the Saviour retained the Jewish festivals, and their days of earthly joy and of national observance, the discordance of the two religions would have been strongly felt, and the Jewish ceremonies would have either been altered or discontinued, and the doctrines both of Jesus and of Moses lost.

Jesus teaches us, that the rupture of the bottle is the loss of the wine; and thus, too, the destruction of a rite involves the loss of the doctrine expressed by it.

Vainly would any set up a new religion without new rites. He then intimates the course which He intended to pursue. As the teacher of a new system, He was determined to institute new rites, which should express to the eye and heart the doctrines which He brought. "New wine must be put into new bottles." This is a truth which our age is slow to apprehend; that Jesus was not a corrector and restorer of Moses and the law, but a Teacher of a system of doctrine different to that of the law, and superior to it in all points. Moses taught JUSTICE to God and man; Jesus, that the receiver of mercy from God must act on the principle of MERCY to his fellows.

The rites or ceremonies appointed by our Lord and His apostles may be stated as four: (I.) Baptism—Matt. xxviii. 19; (II.) The washing of feet—*John* xiii.; (III.) The Lord's Supper—1 Cor. xi.; (IV.) The holy kiss—Rom. xvi. 16, 1 Cor. xvi. 20, 2 Cor. xiii. 12, 1 Thess. v. 26, 1 Pet. v. 14.

I. Now these simple rites present to the eye the main doctrines of the faith. The immersion of a believer in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit not only brings before us the fundamental doctrine of the Trinity, but also the central ones of our justification and sanctification.

1. It teaches us concerning the manner of our *justification*. See that believer buried beneath the water! Wherefore? To represent to the eye that Jesus suffered for him once, died, and was buried. In those acts of Jesus was he one with his Lord. And therefore he is buried into Christ's death, and suffers emblematically with Jesus the law's threatened penalty. But see! he rises again! By death, and death *with Christ*, is sin put away. As he has died with Christ, so being by faith united to Him, has he risen again to newness of life. In the power of the risen Jesus he goes forth henceforward unto victory.

2. It teaches the doctrine of *sanctification* also. Baptism is the burial of the flesh. So evil is the flesh,

so incurably bad, that God has given up trying it any farther. In those that are saved the flesh must be buried. The believer, therefore, is exhibited as born again out of the womb of the water to a new life, even that of the Spirit. Thus is the work of the Spirit set forth in baptism, no less than that of the Lord Jesus.

II. Or look at the washing of the saints' feet. Does not this show, that the place of lowly service is the place of glory now? That the honor which the Christian is to seek, is something opposite to the thoughts of the world, and that if he would resemble his Master, he must not covet the being ministered to by others, but must be employed in ministering to the necessities of the saints.

III. Or turn your eyes to the Supper of the Lord! This presents to the eye another aspect of Christianity: the heavenly union of believers. The other rites may be individual: this is intended to bring together *every member*: to set the whole body of Christ in its blessed unity at once before the eye, as separated from the world, and at unity with itself. It is designed to display Christians as one happy family, gathered around their Father's board, of one heavenly parentage, and having a common expectation of the heavenly inheritance, all ransomed to God by the death of Jesus, and living on Him as their bread of life.

IV. Lastly, the holy kiss testifies to the family affection which is to reign among the priests of God, the brethren of the Lord Jesus, the re-born sons of the Most High.

Thus beautifully are the rites of Christ adapted to display His doctrine to the eye of the spectator. *The new skins contain the new wine*; and are adapted thereto. Any change then in the form of a rite is to be jealously watched and rebuked. It is no trifle. It is a rending of the bottle. The preservation of the *rites* of our Lord is necessary to the preservation of His *doctrine*. That is the keeping of the bottles whole and sound. *Any change in Christ's rites is the rending of the bottles.*

Let us trace out this principle as exhibited to us in various interesting forms in ecclesiastical history.

1. Soon after the apostles died, the churches fell into sad deviations from the doctrine of Christ. Not Scripture, but philosophy, was the guide of many, as early as the second and third centuries. As a consequence, the simplicity of Christ's rites was unsuited to the altered doctrine.

"When any one comes to the *sacrament* of baptism, whether he be an *infant* or adult, they are not admitted to the *fountain of life* before, by *exorcism* and *insufflation* of the *clergy*, the unclean spirit is driven from them." "Receive the rite of exorcism," says Cyril, "with solemnity. When thou art *exorcised*—when thou art *breathed upon*, think it a *means of salvation*." *Sewell's Christian Morals*, p. 146.

"When then the person whose education the church was undertaking, was brought to be baptized, he was first, either in his own person or in his *sponsors*, placed towards the *west*, *barefooted and stripped of his outer garments*—his hands stretched out, as if pushing an enemy from him—his head averted; and thrice he was bidden to *spit in the face of Satan*, as a form of abhorrence and rejection, and thrice to renounce him and all his works. And then he was turned to the *east*—his eyes lifted up to heaven—his hands stretched out in prayer—and he was called on to make a solemn profession of entering into the service of another Master, Christ."—p. 166.

"Baptism is a *covenant*. The church in England no longer registers the *vow* with the same solemn forms which the ancient church once used—bringing men together before baptism, and *commanding them*, by the *voice of their bishop*, to make their *public renunciation of the devil*, and their *promise of obedience to Christ*, with *acts and gestures* which could not be mistaken—'turning from the west to the east'—'stretching out their hands'—*repeating promises*, which they were warned at the time were registered in heaven, and

would be produced against them at the day of judgment; even *subscribing their names to the written declaration, and sealing it with their seals*."—p. 267.

Here are human additions to Christ's rite of baptism. Are those additions in keeping with it? Do they speak the same doctrine? No; *one quite contrary*; one savoring of the law, and of the scene of Mount Sinai, when the people, in the confidence of their own powers, vainly promised, "All that the Lord hath said we will do." That promise was speedily and awfully broken; and Jesus instructs us, that so long as flesh is flesh, so long will all such professions, how solemn soever, end in the condemnation of the makers. 'The Fathers' set up again the false doctrine of the power of fallen human nature; while Christ's baptism *buried* the flesh as worthless and dead. Jesus' religion sets aside national religion and the ties of the flesh: 'the Fathers' set them up anew.

2. Or take the rite of the Lord's Supper as appointed by Jesus. This, in its simplicity, suited not the doctrines which afterwards arose, and its whole form is changed by Rome. The mass has usurped the place of "the breaking of bread." A *priest*, habited in a *peculiar dress*, standing at an *altar*, sacrificing to take away God's wrath from the quick and dead, *bowing* to the altar, *incensing* the bread and wine, *adoring* and *elevating* the *host* and the *chalice*, gives to one or two individuals a wafer whole. Here is the old bottle rent, and answerably thereto the doctrine of the Supper is gone.

3. But now what was the effect, when the true doctrine of our Lord was recovered by Luther, and he discerned that salvation was not the work of man, aided by priest and sacraments, but the gift of God through the work of Jesus, at once received by faith? It was some time ere the effects of this mighty change in doctrine were felt. The results are beautifully described by D'Aubigné (vol. iii. p. 11).

"Four years had elapsed, since an ancient doctrine

had again been preached in the church. The great doctrine of salvation by grace, formerly published in Asia, Greece, and Italy, by Paul and his brethren; and again, after several centuries, discovered in the Bible by a monk of Wittemberg, had echoed from the plains of Saxony to Rome, Paris, and London, and the lofty mountains of Switzerland had repeated its energetic accents. The fountains of truth, liberty, and life had again been opened to humanity. Crowds had repaired thither and quaffed with joy, but those who had pressed forward and taken the draught preserved their former appearance. All within was new, and yet all without seemed to have remained as before.

"The constitution of the church, its ritual and discipline, had not undergone any change. In Saxony, at Wittemberg even, in every place where the new ideas had penetrated, the papal worship gravely continued its pomps; the priest at the foot of the altar, in offering the host to God, seemed to produce an ineffable transformation; monks and nuns entered convents to undertake obligations that were to bind them for ever; pastors lived not as heads of families, brotherhoods assembled, pilgrimages were performed; the faithful hung up their votive offerings on the pillars of chapels; and all ceremonies, even to the most insignificant formality of the sanctuary, were celebrated as before. There was a new *doctrine* in the world, but it had not given itself a new *body*. The language of the priest formed a striking contrast to the proceedings of the priest. He was heard thundering from the pulpit against the mass as an idolatrous worship, and then seen descending and taking his place before the altar, to celebrate the pompous ceremony with scrupulous exactness. Everywhere the new gospel sounded beside the ancient ritual. The priest himself did not perceive the strange inconsistency, and the people who listened with acclamation to the bold discourses of the new preachers, devoutly observed their ancient customs as if they were never to abandon them. At the domestic

hearth and in social life, as in the house of God, every thing remained the same. There was a new faith in the world, but not new works. The season of spring had appeared, but winter seemed still to hold Nature in chains—no flowers, no leaves, nothing external gave indication of the new season. But these appearances were illusory; a potent, though hidden sap was already circulating beneath, and on the eve of changing the world."

"To this course, a course fraught with wisdom, the Reformation perhaps owes its triumphs. Prior to the actual accomplishment of any revolution, there must be a revolution in thought. The inconsistency already alluded to did not even strike Luther at the first glance. He seemed to consider it quite natural, that, while men were receiving his writings with enthusiasm, they should, at the same time, remain devotedly attached to the abuses which these writings attacked. It might even be thought that he had traced out his plan beforehand, and resolved to produce a change of minds before introducing a change of forms. This, however, were to ascribe to him a wisdom, the honour of which belongs to a higher source. He executed a plan which was not of his own devising. These matters he was able, at a later period, to acknowledge and comprehend; but he had not imagined them, and accordingly had not regulated them. God took the lead, Luther's part was to follow."

"Had Luther begun with an external reform; had he, immediately after he had spoken, attempted to abolish monastic vows, the mass, confession, and the existing forms of worship, he should undoubtedly have encountered the keenest opposition. Man must have time before he can adapt himself to great revolutions. Luther was by no means the violent, imprudent, rash innovator that some historians have represented. The people, seeing nothing changed in the routine of their devotions, committed themselves without distrust to their new leader. They were even astonished at the attacks

directed against a man who left them their mass, beads, and confessor, and attributed these attacks to the grovelling jealousy of obscure rivals, or the cruel injustice of powerful adversaries. Meanwhile Luther's ideas aroused the minds of men, improved their hearts, and so undermined the ancient edifice, that it soon fell of its own accord, without any human hand. Ideas do not act instantaneously; they make their way in silence, like water, which filtering behind rocks, detaches them from the mountain on which they rest; all at once, the work done in secret manifests itself, and a single day suffices to display the work of several years, perhaps several ages."

"A new era in the reformation commences. The truth is already re-established in doctrine, and doctrine is now going to re-establish the truth in all the forms of the church and of society. The agitation is too great for men's minds to remain fixed and immovable at the point at which they have arrived."

"On those dogmas, which have been so powerfully shaken, depend customs which are beginning to give way, and which must disappear along with them. There is too much courage and life in the new generation to feel under constraint in the presence of error. Sacraments, ritual, hierarchy, vows, constitution, domestic life, public life, all are about to be modified."

"The ship which has been slowly and laboriously built is about to leave the dock and be launched on the vast ocean."

The same talented historian will present to us the first return to the simplicity of the Lord's Supper.

"As early as the month of October, Carlstadt, with twelve of his friends, had secretly celebrated the Lord's Supper, agreeably to its original institution. The Sunday before Christmas he intimated from the pulpit that, on the feast of the Circumcision, being new-year's day, he would dispense the Supper under the two kinds of bread and wine, to all who should present themselves at the altar; that he would omit all useless ceremonies,

and in celebrating this mass would not put on either cope or chasuble."

"The council, in alarm, requested counsellor Beyer to prevent so great an irregularity. On this, Carlstadt resolved not to wait for the time he had appointed. On Christmas, 1521, he preaches in the parish church on the necessity of abandoning the mass, and receiving the sacrament under the two kinds. After sermon he descends to the altar, pronounces the words of consecration in German; then, turning to the people, who were all attention, he says in a solemn tone, 'Whosoever feels the burden of his sins, and is hungering and thirsting for Divine grace, let him come and receive the body and blood of the Lord.' Afterwards, without raising the host, he distributes the bread and wine to all, saying, 'This is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant.'

"Different sentiments pervaded the audience. Some feeling that new grace from God was given to the church, came to the altar under deep emotion and in silence. Others, attracted particularly by the novelty, approached with agitation and a certain degree of impatience. Only five communicants presented themselves at the confessional. The others simply took part in the public confession of sins. Carlstadt gave general absolution to all, enjoining no other penitence than this, 'Sin no more.' At the close they sang the hymn, 'Lamb of God.'"

4.—Thus advanced the cause of Christ: first came the truth into the soul; at length it clothed itself with its appropriate rite. The Scripture once received as the Word of the Lord to be obeyed by all disciples, the various added rites and ceremonies adopted by Rome fell before its testimony. The principles of the Reformation travelled to England; the doctrines of justification through faith as the gift of God, and of the priesthood of all believers were received by very many; and by degrees, one after another of the unscriptural dogmas and ceremonies of Rome were abandoned.

But there were those in power who looked with no favourable eye on this return to simple evangelical truths and forms. They set themselves to withstand the tide of doctrine, and they posted themselves behind the wall of the ecclesiastical habits.

In King Edward the Sixth's day, Bishop Latimer laid aside the Episcopal vestments. Some were ordained [1549] who scrupled using the sacerdotal dress.—*Puritans in England*, p. 87.

One wise-hearted man determined, that with the return to the true doctrine of the Lord's Supper, the old *altar* should be removed to make way for a *table*.

The following is an *item* in Bishop Ridley's injunctions at his visitation of his diocese, in 1550 :—

“ITEM: Whereas, in divers places, some use the Lord's *board* after the form of a table, and some of an altar, whereby dissension is perceived to arise among the unlearned; therefore, wishing a godly unity to be observed in all our diocese, and for that the form of a table may more move and turn the simple from the old superstitious opinions of the Popish mass, and to the right use of the Lord's Supper, we exhort the curates, churchwardens, and questmen, here present, to erect and set up the Lord's board, after the form of an honest table, decently covered.”—*Puritans in England*, p. 86.

When Queen Elizabeth came to the throne, not a few doubted or denied the lawfulness of the sacerdotal vestments. But the Queen would allow no change: in spite of the strongest pleas, she compelled uniformity. Said Whittingham, Dean of Durham: “*If we compel the servants of Christ to conform unto the Papists, I greatly fear we shall return again to Popery.*”—*Ibid.* 119.

As light increased, and enquiry arose concerning the mind of Christ, scruples were entertained concerning the sign of the cross in baptism, the use of the surplice, and the posture of kneeling at the Lord's Supper. But the powers civil and ecclesiastical would

admit of no parley. The following scene is very striking :—

Thomas Becon “was one of the London clergy deprived by the ecclesiastical commissioners at Lambeth, in 1565, when the Bishop of London's chancellor said, ‘My masters, and the ministers of London, the council's pleasure is, that ye strictly keep the unity of apparel like to this man’—pointing to Mr. Robert Cole, a minister, likewise of the city, who had refused the habits awhile, and now complied, and stood before them canonically habited—‘as you see him: that is, a square cap, a scholar's gown, *priest-like*, a tippet; and in the church, a linen surplice, and inviolably observe the rubric of the Common Prayer, and the Queen's Majesty's injunctions, and the Book of Convocation. Ye that will presently subscribe, write *Volo* (I will), those that will not subscribe, write *Nolo* (I refuse). Be brief; make no words.’ And when some would have spoken, the answer was, ‘Peace! peace! Apparitor, call the churches. Masters, answer presently, under penalty of contempt, and set your names.’”—*Puritans in England*, p. 135.

Shall we say it was only a series of frivolous objections on the Puritan side, to which authority should lend no ear? Nay, but behind all lay the great principles of the regulation of the churches of Christ, not by the civil magistrate, but by believers only; the priesthood of all believers in opposition to the priesthood of ordained men only, and the still more weighty truth, that God accepts only the rites of His own appointing. “In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

The same question has revived in our day, in the controversy (now past) concerning preaching in a surplice, or in a gown. Behind the seeming trifling of the detail lies the great doctrine of the priestly mediatorship of ordained men, as asserted by the Puseyite, and denied by the Scripture.

So adapted are the Lord's rites to His doctrine, that

they exhibit by their alterations or omissions every internal change in the doctrine. Are *additions* made to His few simple *ceremonies*, bringing them near to Judaic complexity and pomp? It is because additions have been made to the *doctrine* of the Gospel, and the teaching has approximated to that of the Law, or is become identical with it. Are rites of the Lord Jesus altered in the way of diminution? It is because false doctrine of the nature of Sadduceeism has come in. A young Christian informed me, that she and some of her friends imbibed the teetotal doctrine of the polluting nature of alcohol. They therefore made a syrup of some kind, and partook of it at the Lord's Supper, instead of wine. They became dissatisfied, after awhile, with this arrangement; and if I recollect rightly, substituted water for the syrup. It then struck them, that there was no need for their assembling themselves for the Lord's Supper; and they agreed, that on a fixed time, they would enter their chambers, and for an hour meditate on the sufferings of Christ, as a thing equally edifying with the Lord's Supper. And, after a time, as was natural, that also seemed to them a feeble and useless thing, and fell to the ground.

When Mahomet arose, he adopted, as the entrance rite of His religion, circumcision. It agreed with a national fleshly system, one which approached far nearer to the Law than to the Gospel. He denied the foundations of the faith, asserting that God could have no Son; and denying also both the death and resurrection of Jesus. Hence, he refused the rite of baptism, which speaks of death and resurrection; and forbidding the use of wine altogether, he could not own the Lord's Supper. He was equally hostile to the rites and doctrines of Jesus.

In the times of the Commonwealth arose a man who derived his doctrines, not from Scripture; but, as he declared, from direct inspiration of God. To him, the Scriptures were not the Word of God; and he was sent to turn men from the *outward* Christ, who was

born at Bethlehem, and died at Jerusalem, to the *inward* Christ, which is found in the soul of every man.

"All friends of the Lord, everywhere, whose minds are turned in towards the Lord, take heed to the light within you, which is the light of Christ. That which calls your minds out of the earth, turns them towards God, where the pure babe is born of the Virgin; and the Babe's food is known, the children's bread, which comes from the living God, and nourishes up to eternal life. These babes and children receive their wisdom from above, from the pure living God, and not from the earthly one: for that is trodden underfoot with such."—*G. Fox's Journal*, I. 307, *Armistead's Edition*.

This system then, denying the outward Christ and His doctrines, refused also altogether the rites which Jesus had ordained. "Their 'sacrament' as they call it, is carnal; and their communion is carnal, a little bread and wine, which is the table of devils, and cup of devils, which is in the generation of serpents in this great city Sodom and Gomorrah."—*G. Fox*.—"News out of North." *Leslie* II. 766. Nor to this day will they (Quakers) allow the Scriptures to be read in their meetings.

But the awful Antichrist has yet to come, backed by all the power of Satan, and denying the foundations of the Christian faith. His doctrines being in express and designed hostility to those of our Lord, and to those of the Old Testament also, he will not own the rites either of Moses or of Christ; but will set up his image to be worshipped, and will require those who worship him to stamp their forehead or right hand with his name, or his mark, or his number, 666.

Now it is a proof that the Popes are not the Antichrist, that they use the rites appointed by Jesus, greatly as they have disfigured them by corruptions and additions.

We conclude then—that

1.—There must be visible religious observances in

order to testify religious doctrine, and to perpetuate it among men. Strangely would one desire us to destroy the skin in order to save the wine, even if he pointed out to us that the skin was no part of the wine.

2.—That those ordinances must be *adapted* visibly to express the doctrine; or else the friction between the doctrine and the rite will end in the loss of both.

3.—That the Saviour refused to allow of the mingling of the rites of the Old Testament with those of the New. His doctrine was not a furbishing up of the old, but new doctrine, even as it seemed to those accustomed to the law: Mark i. 22—27; Matthew vii. 28, 29. The old rites are wholly unsuited to the new doctrine. And therefore the rite of circumcision is not to be made our teacher in regard of the subjects of baptism. Apostles resisted most earnestly the introduction of circumcision; because its entrance would have caused the whole of the law to follow; and the disciples of Jesus among the Gentiles would have been fettered by the bondage of Moses: Acts xv; Gal. ii. iv. v.

4.—In those words “Both (bottles) are preserved,” we read, I believe, the Lord’s design, that both the ceremonies and the doctrines of the Old Testament and of the New, should be retained by their respective people till His return. Jesus owned both in their place. He celebrated the Passover just before His betrayal; and on it He engrafted the Lord’s Supper. He promised the fulfilment of the Passover in His coming millennial kingdom: Luke xxii. 15, 16.

5.—The Saviour also teaches us, that the influx of erroneous doctrine will exert its *first effects on the forms or rites of Christianity*. The new wine ferments within its unfitted barriers, and seeks to mould the unadapted rites to itself. Then follows some change devised by man. This is the rending of the skin. Thereupon ensues the loss of the doctrine, which the Lord had, as it were, treasured up in the ordinance; and, finally, the ordinance itself sinks into contempt.

“The bottles perish.” It is manifest that this was the case in the sin of Jeroboam. God had made Jerusalem the great centre of the Jewish nation, whither the tribes were to go up, and worship at His temple. But this doctrine was not suited to Jeroboam. He feared lest, if the ten tribes went up thither, they would return to the house of David. He dares not trust the new wine in the old bottles. He devises, therefore, new bottles for the new wine. “It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold thy gods, ● Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” Thus came the calves, and a mimic temple and priesthood, and a new feast, the device of his own heart. Thus his new doctrine rent the old skins as unsuited to himself, but the new wine and the new bottles agreed together too fatally for Israel; and the end was total apostasy to the idols of the nations.

Therefore, too, I gather, that the doctrine of the teetotaler is opposed to that of our Lord. Any one who asserts that alcohol is evil, is constrained to forbid wine at the Lord’s table. His doctrine is new, and it attacks the rite ordained by Christ. *His* spiritual wine would rend the skin in which the Lord Jesus has enshrined His doctrine. Thus it is new wine. It is new and fearful poison, against which we are cautioned (1 Tim. iv.), as that which will cause the utter abandonment of Christianity. Any change, therefore, in the liquor used at the Lord’s table bespeaks the influx of deadly error. It manifests that the skin is rent, and the doctrine it contains will not tarry long behind it. This is illustrated by the anecdote above related.

The Lord Jesus further instructs us, that, as the rending of the rite involves also the loss of the doctrine, so *the preservation of the rites and the doctrines is mutual*. “They put new wine into new bottles; and both are preserved together (*συντηρουνται*).” If you would keep the wine, you must preserve the skins from injury. If you keep the bottle, you keep also the wine. Preserve the form of the rite as it was

at the beginning, and you will retain also the doctrine such as it was at first delivered to the saints. And a return to the old doctrine will bring back the old rite.

6.—Observe also, the Saviour knew that the chief danger to be apprehended to His institutions, would arise *from within*. He does not suppose the force that destroys the bottles to come from without: but the striving of new wine from within. And so it has been. Doctrine unlike His own has arisen in the churches, and this has caused the omission, or the alteration of the rites. Every alteration is a rending of the skin, and entails a permanent loss of the doctrine.

But there is yet one more view of the case.

“And no man having drank old wine, immediately desireth new, for he saith, the old is milder.”*

This is the concluding answer to those who desired that His disciples should be enjoined to fast. The Redeemer did not wish, He says, to lead them to *drink more deeply into the spirit of the Law*. Rather He sought to wean them from that taste, that He might prepare their palate for the new savour of the Gospel. His leading them away from their trades, and homes, and professions, was something quite different from the spirit of the Law. *That* gave to each son of Israel a home and a fixed heritage. But this made them Levites, in attendance on the tabernacle in its movements, having no heritage but the Lord their God. The Law had indeed its yoke, its multitude of observances hard to bear. But yet the Jew was accustomed to it, as the drinker of old wine is to its flavour. And the self-denying spirit of the Saviour's teaching was more harsh and difficult to endure than the requirements of the Law, especially to a palate prejudiced

* *Χρηστωτερος*. In proof of its sense as signifying “easy,” “kind,” “gentle,” see Matt. xi. 30; Luke vi. 25. *Tregelles* reads—‘Is mild.’

beforehand by use in favour of the flavour of the old. “The old wine was *milder*.” It required only the *restraining* and *taming* the flesh: the new required the *crucifying* and *mortifying* of it.

The Saviour therefore saw, that the more His disciples were led to imbibe the spirit of the Law, the less would they like the spirit of the Gospel. They were children who were to be weaned from milk to solid food. He knew that the requirements of His new doctrine would seem harsh to one satisfied with the Law. The Law required of man to be just and kind, and to give to the poor out of the abundance promised. This is easier far to man's selfish spirit than to “sell that we have and give alms.” The command to love one's *neighbour* may be well responded to. That was the taste of the old Law. But to love one's *enemy*, this is the harsher and rougher flavour of the new. “Eye for eye,” was the savour of the old wine. “I say unto you, that ye resist not evil,” is the harsher savour of the new.

He then that had been accustomed to the old could not be brought suddenly to say, that he liked the new. The vineyard whence the wine came might be heavenly, but the taste was rough. His palate was not prepared for it. At all events, “the old was *milder*.” Use had made it pleasanter. On this he would fall back as his sufficient reason. It was even thus in the wilderness. The corn of Egypt fails; but the heaven is opened, the bread of heaven is let fall among the tents of Israel. “So man did eat angels' food.” But the palates accustomed to the old flour of wheat did not prefer the new bread. “*Our soul loatheth this light bread:*” Num. xxi. 5.

The Gospel has a different flavour from the Law. It is an *acquired taste*. The palate that is pleased with the Law is offended at the harsher taste of the Gospel. To acquire the Gospel savour we must taste often of the new, and not go back to the old. Here, be it observed, the Lord Jesus is occupied with the

question of *doctrine only*. He begins with considering *rite only*, as the garment, and the patch upon the garment. He proceeds to treat of *rite in its intimate connexion with doctrine*, in the parable of the skins and the wine. And He finishes by touching on the question of the genius and *spirit* of the Law and of the Gospel respectively. All glory be to the Lord of wisdom Who brings us His wisdom !

THE WHEAT

AND THE TARES.

BY
R. GOVETT.

THE WHEAT AND THE TARES,

THE Spirit of God had descended, and rested on Jesus without measure, while the Father's voice proclaimed Him His Son. But Israel knew Him not. The learned foes of Christ blasphemed the Spirit by which He cast out demons, as the spirit of Beelzebub. At once our Lord alters His attitude toward Israel. He owns as His relatives the doers of His Father's will only. He teaches the multitudes, not directly, as before; but by means of prophetic similitudes, difficult to understand. He puts a veil upon His face, as of old did Moses.

Seven parables are given in the 13th of Matthew, one of the chief of which is the Wheat and the Tares. We may consider it under four heads.

- I. THE HOUSEHOLDER'S PLAN, AND ITS MARRING.
- II. THE SERVANT'S INQUIRY, AND PROPOSAL.
- III. THE HOUSEHOLDER'S DETERMINATION.
- IV. THE DISPOSAL OF THE MINGLED CROP.

Begin we then with

I. THE HOUSEHOLDER'S PLAN.

“Another parable proposed he to them, saying,

“The kingdom of the heavens is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field. But while men were asleep, his enemy came and sowed darnel [zizan] among the wheat, and went away.”

Jesus is the Sower of the good seed. That signifies His raising up true Christians in the world.

During the night the Householder's enemy visited the field, and sowed zizan among the wheat. The enemy here is the devil. This work of Satan cannot be effectually counteracted by man. No blame is attributable to the servants of the farm, as if it were owing to their want of watchfulness that the mischief entered. Who thinks of watching by night a field after its sowing? The Householder, too, does not rebuke the servants, when they ask an explanation of the appearance of the darnel. Had the fault been theirs, they would naturally have been told, that the blame was due to them: that but for their want of watchfulness, the evil complained of would have had no existence. But no such reproach is uttered.

What is the zizan?

The English version renders it 'tares.' But it should be translated 'darnel.' It is a well-known plant in the East.

Dr. Kitto says—

"The *ziwan* of the Arabs is concluded to be our 'darnel,' the *Lolium temulentum* of botanists, and is well suited to the palate. [probably should be 'parable.'] It is a grass often found in cornfields, resembling the wheat till both are in ear, and remarkable as one of the very few of the numerous family of grasses possessed of deleterious properties." *Bibl. Lit. under 'Tares.'*

Dr. Smith, in his Dictionary of the Bible, says—

"'Tares.' There can be little doubt that the *zizania* of the parable (Matt. xiii, 25) denote the weed called 'darnel,' (*Lolium temulentum*) a widely distributed grass, and the only species of the order that has deleterious properties. The word used by the Evangelist is an Oriental, and not a Greek term. It is the Arabic *zawān*, and the *zōnîn* of the Talmud."

In Cassell's Bible Dictionary we read—

"'Tares.' This is the translation of the word *zizania*, which occurs in Matt. xiii, 25, and several of the following verses. The word, however, is not met with in any Greek author, and is supposed to be the *ziwan* of the Arabs—'darnel,' or *Lolium temulentum*."

Dr. Thomson, twenty-five years a missionary in Palestine, says—

"The common Arabic name for the 'tare' is *zowan*, and this, I presume, is the root of the Greek name *zizania*. The 'tare' abounds all over the East, and is a great nuisance to the farmer. It resembles the American '*cheat*,' but the head does not droop like '*cheat*,' nor does it branch like oats. The grain also is smaller, and is arranged along the upper part of the stalk, which stands perfectly erect. The *taste* is bitter, and when eaten separately, or even when diffused in ordinary bread, it causes dizziness, and often acts as a violent emetic." "Of course the farmers are very anxious to exterminate it, but this is nearly impossible." *Land and Book*, p. 421.

In the explanation of the parable, Jesus says, "The darnel are the sons of the Wicked One."

The devil, then, is represented by our Lord as raising up *counterfeit Christians*. The darnel does not represent wicked men in general, any more than the wheat represents good men in general. Jesus raised up a peculiar class of the saved, differing from those who had preceded. The Wicked One raised up a peculiar class of the lost, to counterfeit true Christians. Answerably hereto darnel, in its earlier stages of growth, greatly resembles wheat. It is only when both run into ear, that the characteristic differences appear. This is supposed in the parable.

"But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the darnel also."

On this Kitto observes—

"The darnel, before it comes into ear, is very similar in appearance to wheat; hence the command that the *zizania* should be left to the harvest, lest while men plucked up the tares, they should root up also the wheat with them."

Archdeacon Stanley says—that

“The tall green stalks of the *zuwan*, if sowed designedly through the fields, would be inseparable from the wheat, from which, even when growing naturally and by chance, they are at first sight hardly distinguishable.”

Dr. Thompson says—

“The grain is just in the proper stage to illustrate the parable. In those parts where the grain has *headed out*, the tares have done the same, and then a child cannot mistake them for wheat or barley: but where both are less developed, the closest scrutiny will often fail to detect them. Even the farmers, who in this country weed their fields, do not attempt to separate the one from the other.”

Jerome, who lived in Palestine, says—

“Between wheat and the *zizan*, which we call ‘darnel,’ as long as it is in the blade, and is not come into ear, there is a great resemblance, and it is either impossible, or very difficult, to discriminate between the one and the other.”

I have been the more careful here to give my proofs and my authorities, because a Christian man, of great ability, denying the pre-millennial advent, has affirmed that the passage gives not the shadow of a foundation for the opinion. We see the contrary. *Zizan* means ‘darnel.’ The *zizan* which the enemy sowed in the field was undistinguishable at first from the wheat. It was only when the two showed their respective fruit, that the difference between the one and the other appeared. This also, as the authorities cited show, is the case in fact with the plant in question.

Our Lord, then, foresaw, and here, by implication foretells, that His religion would triumph over the idolatries of the Roman world, as it has done in the South Sea Islands. It would do away with heathen temples, and introduce a national Christianity. Multitudes of unconverted men would comply with Christian rites, and seem to own the doctrine of Christ, while they were really children of the Wicked One.

So it has come to pass. With the form of godliness, multitudes are strangers to its power. With the name of Christian, thousands do not trust the Saviour. False teachers of other gospels, really ministers of Satan, would instruct men to trust, in whole or in part, to ceremonies and good works, as their hope of salvation.

He foretells too the marring of His work by His foe. This confusion of the true Christians with the false has ever given occasion to the specious objection of the infidel—‘What mischiefs has this Christianity brought on the world! What deceits, quarrels, bloodshed, wars, cruelties, have not its adherents inflicted on the earth’s inhabitants! What millions has not Rome tortured and slain by its Inquisition!’

This popular objection arises from confounding together the darnel and the wheat, as if both alike were sown and owned by Christ. Nay, but distinguish, friend, between the work of Christ and the work of Satan! Jesus does not own as His all who bear His name. He does not consider a national ecclesiastical system of religion as a realization of His plan.

He foretells further, that toward the close of this day of God’s patience, the difference between true Christians and nominal ones will come out into conspicuous relief.

In the earlier days of Christianity, after apostles had left the field, the difference between true Christians and counterfeit ones was little perceived; for the elements of Christian truth which the earlier ages discerned, accepted, and taught, were few. But since the Reformation, the Holy Spirit had caused one truth after another to be beheld in the pages of the New Testament, and to be accepted and taught by true Christians. A consequent leaving of what is unchristian and antichristian has therefore come in.

This process is going on fast in our day. More light is by the Spirit shed upon the mind of God in our dispensation. More and more does the difference

between Christ's truth and human error appear. But this increase of light discriminates more and more true Christians from the false. With every truth of Christ elicited from God's word, there are those who accept it, and are transforming by it into the image of Christ.

But at the same time there are those called Christians to whom these truths are distasteful. More and more do they feel and exhibit their opposition, by holding and teaching the opposite errors. This development of error is going on, as our Lord forewarned us, in two opposite directions.

1. There are the *Pharisees*, who add men's traditions to the words of Christ and his apostles. 'The Church' is with them the supreme authority. 'The priest' comes in as the introducer of sacramental grace, and idolatry follows with all its hideousness. High Churchmen have become Puseyites; Puseyites have developed into Ritualists; Ritualists differ but in circumstances from Rome.

2. The opposition of the unregenerate led on by Satan is also seen in the *Sadducee*. He cuts off from Scripture what he deems unsuitable, obsolete, the dictate of a lower civilization. Reason is with him supreme. Many nominal Christians are drawing off from Christ in this direction also. To many the earth with its good things seems the one object worth pursuit, and they openly avow their refusal of the doctrine which would make us strangers and pilgrims here.

We come then to,

II. THE SERVANTS' INQUIRY AND PROPOSAL.

"Now the slaves of the householder came to him, and said to him—'Lord, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field; whence then hath it darnel?'"

"But he said to them, 'An enemy hath done this.' But they say to him, 'Wilt thou then that we go off and collect them together?'"

True Christians grieve at this defacing of the Saviour's plan. But he is quite aware of it. As the Householder he traces it to the Great Foe of God and man.

But shall the field always be allowed to be in this state of confusion? May not Christ's true hearted servants restore the original design? May they not roll away from their Master the discredit which attaches to the mixture of the true Christians with the false?

How do they propose to effect this rectification and to realize the spectacle of a field covered with ripe wheat alone?

By the employment of *force*. Did not Joshua by the sword purge the promised land of the idolaters that defiled it? Did not the ten tribes seek to destroy evil doers of Gibeah by the sword?

This brings us to the Third Point.

III. THE HOUSEHOLDER'S DETERMINATION.

"But he saith—

'Nay, lest while gathering together the darnel ye root up together with them the wheat. Allow both to grow together until the harvest, and in the season of harvest, I will say to the reapers, Collect together first the darnel, and bind them together in bundles to burn them, but gather together the wheat into my barn.'"

The plan of the servants then is refused. Persecution unto death of false Christians was their proposal. By force they were to be rooted out of the world.

This is the meaning in Scripture of 'rooting out'—'forcible removal,' and generally destruction of life. Jehovah in the latter days, means to make the land of Palestine brimstone, salt, and burning, as the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. He will do it in his anger against their idolatry, so that men shall say, "The Lord *rooted them out* of their land in anger and in wrath,

and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day :” Deut. xxix, 28.

And again Solomon says—a truth which is closely connected with our parable,—“For the upright shall dwell in the land, [it should be ‘earth,’ the same word is so translated in the next verse] and the perfect shall remain in it. *But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it :*” Prov. 21, 22.

But even when the difference between the real ones and the counterfeits is come to its height, so that none can mistake the difference, the expedient is not to be tried. In the field the darnel’s roots are so mixed with those of the wheat, that the attempt to pluck up the weed would destroy also the good grain. Any endeavour to slay the nominal Christian would be attended with death to true believers also.

Moreover, out of evil parents some of the sons of the kingdom will arise. Some of the tares will change to wheat. The slaughter of the false Christians would involve the death of the true, in war ; and by grief for the loss of kindred.

At this point our friends of the Church of England assail us, confident that their national Establishment is accordant with the mind of Christ.

‘This passage proves, how unsound are the views of you Dissenters about the constitution of the Church of Christ. You attempt to do the very thing which our Lord here forbids. You would have the field to consist of wheat alone, and endeavour to discriminate between the wheat and the tare ; accepting the one, refusing the other. You are vainly and wickedly attempting to set up a pure church, an assembly of renewed men alone, when the tares and the wheat are, as you confess, to continue mixed till Christ comes. Yet you attempt to sever them, and to keep them separate. No ! No ! thank God, we of the National Church know better than *that !*’

Are Dissenters then sinning against our Lord’s words ? Is the associating together in church fellowship as believers exclusively, a thing forbidden ? If so, we ought to repent, and alter our course at once. What shall we reply ?

‘You assume, friend, that *the field*, in which the wheat and the tares are to continue mixed, is *the Church*. Is it so ? What does Jesus say ? ver. 38. “*The field is THE WORLD.*” Oh then ! that alters the case altogether ! We do not attempt to purge *the world* of false professors. We refuse to admit the employment of *force* against the ungodly, in relation to religion. But does that require us *to admit unbelievers into the Church of Christ ?* Look at the Epistles ! To whom were they written ? To assemblies of believers alone ! They are addressed to “saints,” to the “callers on the name” of Jesus, to “the faithful in Christ !”

And does not the Holy Spirit command, that those guilty of immoralities shall be *put out of the church into the world ?* 1 Cor. v. This is not the rooting up of the darnel out of the *field* ; but only exclusion from the *church*.

Herein also the Prayer Book witnesses against itself. It testifies that there was originally a godly discipline in the Church, which in consequence of its allying itself to the State it is unable to exert, though it were greatly to be desired. It demands, that notorious evil livers, and persons living in malice with each other be kept from communion. It declares, that all who affirm the Prayer Book to contain anything superstitious or unlawful, are at once excommunicated.

Either then it goes too far, or not far enough. If the *field* be the *church*, not even the most notorious sinner ought to be removed. And Paul, in requiring the incestuous Corinthian to be expelled, was in contradiction with his Lord. But if the field be the *world*, then all this argument about retaining the ungodly in the *church* goes for nothing. And the Establishment is

self-condemned, for not exercising the discipline which would exclude the evil from what professes to be the church.

"Let both grow together until the harvest."

What is the harvest? "*The end of the age.*" * ver. 39.

The author alluded to says, That this means, *the "age or time allotted to man's earthly existence—the age of man."* "The harvest is the end of the age, or the termination of man's earthly career:" pp. 43, 46. How does he prove it? He gives no proof at all. And the parable hints the contrary. For the sowing of the wheat began long after the creation of man. It commenced only with Jesus' personal ministry. "He that soweth the good seed *is the Son of Man:*" ver. 37. Jesus was not Son of Man till his birth of Mary. And is the world burnt up as soon as the tares and wheat are removed. By no means! It becomes the scene, after its cleansing by the angels, of the "*kingdom*" of "*the Son of Man:*" ver. 41.

What then is the *age* spoken of? When did it begin? And when will it end? It begins, I believe, with the removal of the kingdom from the house of David, and its transfer to the Gentiles: Dan. i, ii. During this period God calls himself "the God of the heaven:" Dan. ii, 18, 19, 28, 37, 44, etc. He left His abode in the city and temple of Jerusalem, retiring to the heaven, as we are informed by Ezekiel: Ezek. viii, ix, x, xi. Ezekiel sees the glory withdrawing, step by step. And, in consequence, all through the period of "this age," the earth is evil. The days are evil: Eph. v, 16; vi, 13; Gal. i, 4. Satan is its God: 2 Cor. iv, 4; Eph. ii, 2; vi, 12. Christians are not to be like the children of this age: Rom. xii,

* Not the same word as in ver. 38. There it signifies a locality. Here a period of time.

2. The Sun of Righteousness is away: it is the cold, wintry, slippery, season. But the Sun of Righteousness shall arise on Israel and the earth with healing: Mal. iv. Then Israel, the Lord's fig-tree, will bud and blossom, and fill the world with fruit. Summer is then nigh at hand, when Israel's heart becomes tender, and the Mosaic rites, so long discontinued, return: Matt. xxiv, 32, 33. Then the better age will come, and the first resurrection. Blessed those who are accounted worthy to escape the evils coming on earth at the end of the age, and to partake of the new and better age, which opens to believers by resurrection: Luke xx, 34—36. It is now the time of patience and consequent mystery. But at the seventh trump the mystery of God ends, and God resumes to Himself the kingdom which for awhile, in chastisement of Israel, He passed on to the Gentiles: Rev. xi, 15—18. The kingdom is the Lord's, and earth and heaven rejoice: Zech. xiv. The wicked are cut off in "the end," or the time of indignation: Dan. viii, 17—19.

Let us see to it, then, that we are not conformed to this age, or engrossed in its cares, or identified with the rulers of this evil age, who are coming to nought, and are to be superseded by the Lord Jesus and His risen saints: 1 Cor. ii, 6, 8; Rev. xix, xx; 1 Cor. iv, 8—16. Jesus is spiritually and invisibly with His heavenly people, "all the days till the end of the age:" Matt. xxviii, 20. But then He will return and visibly reign, and the approved will reign with Him.

"And in the season of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather the darnel, then bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

Jesus expounds the matter for us. "The reapers are (not men, but) angels." * As if He had said—"I admire as little as you this patched and party-coloured

* There is no article before 'angels' in ver. 39.

look of my field. The discrimination you advise shall at length be effected ; but (1) not *yet*, and (2) not by *you*.'

(2) 'You lack the discernment and the power required. Human force can match and beat back human force. But the strength of men will not avail to resist the might of angels. (1) Moreover the ripeness neither of the true Christian in my truth, nor of the anti-christian in Satan's lie, is yet come.'

But what is the Scripture meaning of "the end of the age?"

First, Holy Writ testifies, that there are two ages—the present one, which is evil ; and the future, which is to be a good one.

It testifies of two ages, where Jesus says of the blasphemer against the Holy Ghost, he shall not be forgiven, "either in *this* age, or in *the one to come*:" Matt. xii, 32. It distinguishes between the men of this age, possessed by cares relating to this time, and those accounted worthy to attain the age to come. That age begins with the resurrection of the just : Luke xx, 34—36. Here the age is a definite period of time ; not eternity. We identify it, then, with the day of reward, the thousand years of bliss : Rev. xx, 4—6 ; xi, 18. Lovers of this present age lose the one to come : 2 Tim. iv, 9 ; Matt. xiii, 22. Paul on the other hand would be counted worthy to attain it, as the prize of his calling : 2 Tim. iv, 18. But the hope of our calling is *one* : Eph. iv, 4. That hope is sometimes stated to be the first resurrection, sometimes the resurrection of the just, sometimes the kingdom.

This age is evil : Gal. i, 4. Satan is its prince and god : 2 Cor. iv ; Eph. vi, 12. Against him and his angels the Church has to wrestle. And while it does so, it is 'the evil day' of battle. But the victory is coming, when Satan shall be hurled from above. Then the heaven is clear ; but earth is the scene of woe : Rev. xii. After that Jesus casts him out of earth into

the pit, and the kingdom of God comes to earth. That is the blessed day when earth is to rejoice, because Christ, its King, has come to judge the nations in righteousness : Psa. xevi.

It will be the day of joy to both earth and heaven.

The time of harvest is the Lord's 'short work' of judgment on the living, when *transgressors are rooted out of the earth*. "For the upright shall dwell in the land, (earth,) and the perfect shall remain in it. *But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it*:" Prov. ii, 21, 22. "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth : much more the wicked and the sinner :" Prov. xi, 31. Here, then, is not the world's burning up, *but its continuance after the rooting out of transgressors from it*.

The princes of this age are coming to nought, and will be dismissed when Christ takes the kingdom : 1 Cor. ii, 8 ; Luke i, 51—55.

But with Jesus reign the twelve apostles over the twelve tribes of Israel, (Luke xxii, 28—30,) and a number of others will reign with Christ : Rev. xx, 4—6. All of these are to be raised from the dead : so it is certain that *that* age has never come.

From the preceding view of the parable, it is evident that the much talked-of 'conversion of the world' by the gospel will never take place. The patience of God and of His people produces only the ripeness both of Christians and antichristians. Each system pushes on to its real development. This is exactly what is taking place now. Ours is a dispensation of election. Only God's elect believe, in spite of the earnest presentation of the gospel, by evangelists taught of God.

We come, then, fourthly, to

IV. THE DISPOSAL OF THE MINGLED CROP.

"As, therefore, the darnel are collected, and burned in fire, so shall it be at the end of the age.

"The Son of Man shall send his angels, and they shall gather together out of his kingdom all stumbling-blocks, and those that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

That is, the natural winding up of a cornfield at the season of the harvest is typical of the history of our world.

This is testified to by a scene in the Revelation. There the crowned Reaper, the Son of Man, who sowed the good seed, casts His sickle on the earth, and the earth is reaped. After that comes the vintage of the vine of the earth. Its grapes are gathered, and trodden in the wine-press of wrath; and blood—forming a deep and fearfully broad lake—flows out. Here, as the Harvest answers to the ingathering of the wheat, so the Vintage to the judgment on the tares. But what, according to the law of Moses, followed upon harvest and vintage? A feast! The festival of Tabernacles: a season of rejoicing at the close of the year.

"Thou shalt observe the *feast of tabernacles* seven days after that thou hast gathered in thy *corn and thy wine*: and thou shalt *rejoice* in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates. Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the Lord thy God in the place which the Lord shall choose: because the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice." Deut. xvi, 13—15.

This answers to the millennial day of joy—the closing up of the earth's long year.

The day of God's patience, "the acceptable year of the Lord," will at length end. It will end in judgment brought in by Christ, appearing visibly as "Son of Man." Angels will, at His command, seize on the living "doers of lawlessness," and cast them into the

"furnace of fire," Where is that? Just outside Jerusalem; in the valley of Hinnom: Is. xxx, 27—33; xxxi, 9.

"And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." Is. lxvi, 23, 24.

This furnace of fire exists before the millennium, for into it are cast the False Christ and the False Prophet: Rev. xix, 10.

"And the Beast was taken, and with him the False Prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." Rev. xix, 20.

They abide there all the thousand years.

In it the wicked mourn and despair. Nor does their woe end with the thousand years. But after the judgment of the dead before the Great White Throne, it continues for ever.

The angels also remove "all stumbling-blocks." (*σκανδαλα*.) What are they? The material instruments by which evil men carry on their evil deeds. Such are idols, images, evil pictures, wicked books, evil songs, cards, gambling-tables, dice, and so on. Also buildings devoted to wickedness will be destroyed, such as theatres, offices of the Inquisition, heathen temples, buildings where idolatry is practised, and so on.

Thus, by way of preventing infection after death by pestilence, wise doctors require the burning up of the infected dresses and beds.

This is the clearance of the kingdom of *the Son of Man*. This removal of the wicked and their works is

in order to Christ's reigning in peace over the earth. For what is the kingdom of the Son of Man? It is the present earth—the place of sheep and oxen, beasts, and fowls, and fish: Ps. viii. 4--8; xcvi, 10--13.

In short, one of the yet uncompleted types of the Law is the Leprous House: Lev. xiv, 33--47. It appeared to God, the owner of the House, that there was a plague of leprosy in it. Then was the order given to *prepare** the House (*margin*.) before the Priest went in to regard it officially. Answerably John the Baptist was sent before the Lord to prepare His way, to make ready a people for Him. This preparation of the house was, in order that all that was in the house should not be pronounced unclean. Thus the believers whom John called out prevented God's pronouncing all the earth unclean. Jesus then came—the Priest after the order of Melchizedec, and found the plague in the house: for wickedness was fearfully prevalent in Israel.

After that, the priest was to go out of the house, and shut it up seven days. Accordingly, Jesus has left the earth, and God's patience is tarrying, while the call to repentance is sent to the world. But on the seventh day the priest was to return, and if the plague were spread in the house, he was to command that the stones in which the plague was, should be taken away, and cast into an unclean place outside the city. Answerably thereto, we have, in this parable, the angels, at Jesus' command, taking away the tares, the children of the Wicked One, and casting them into the furnace of fire, which is to be in unclean Tophet, outside the city of Jerusalem. Other stones were to be brought in, and fresh mortar, and the house to be RESTORED, not

* This is the reading of the margin; and it is the true rendering. John was to prepare the way. (*κατασκευαζω*.) the word used by the LXX in Lev. xiv. And in the Gospels, Matt. xi, 10; Mark i, 2; Luke i. 17; vii, 27.

destroyed: 42. But if, after *that*, the plague break out anew, the whole house is to be broken up, and no more rebuilt. So, after the restoration of all things which God has been speaking of by all His holy prophets, when Jesus, at Israel's repentance, shall have come out of the heaven, and ruled the thousand years, evil shall burst forth once more. Satan shall deceive the nations who go up to smite Jerusalem. Then fire burns them up, and earth itself is destroyed, and its place found no more!

The Son of Man does not begin to reign, till the angels, visibly descending, have cleared His kingdom of things and persons that are evil. His kingdom begins at His appearing with His angels. His kingdom, then, is not burnt up. You would not cleanse that which you are going to destroy. The clearance of earth, then, in order to be the kingdom of the Son of Man, proves that the earth is not to be burnt up as soon as Jesus appears.

'But who will be His subjects? If the wicked are cast into the fire, and the righteous are caught away to the garner of God, where will there be either righteous or wicked to be found on earth?'

The difficulty which our opponents press on us at this point, arises out of the narrowness of the opposing system. The objector knows only of Christians and anti-christians. But God is now recognizing three classes of men on earth.

(1) The *Jews*, (2) the *Gentiles*, and (3) the *Church of God*: 1 Cor. x, 32. The entire removal, then, of believers of the Church, and of 'the doers of lawlessness,' leaves still Jews and Gentiles.

Does this scene of the judgment of the living end with the burning of the earth there and then? No!

After the removal of the stumbling-blocks, and of the wicked, by God's wrath in the day of the Lord, earth is not burnt up, but the remnant of Israel is brought back repentant to its land, and rejoices before Jehovah

its King. They shall be a praise among all the people of the earth : Zeph. i, iii.

The angels shall cast the wicked "*into the furnace of fire* : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Here, then, there is a place of burning on earth ; but it is confined to that, and *there* there is sorrow, and its manifestation. But the earth cleared of its evil is the place of Messiah's "kingdom," and of the joy of the remnant, both Jews and Gentiles. Yea, the creatures of earth are called to rejoice ! This cannot mean that they are to be burnt up, then ! They are to rejoice before the Lord, because He comes to reign over earth : Ps. xcvi, xcvi, cxlviii, cxlix. Fire shall burn up the Lord's foes, but earth and its isles are to rejoice, and Israel to be glad : Ps. xcvi.

The civth Psalm is especially forcible. 'God shall rejoice in His works.' *This He has never yet done.* He rested on the seventh day from the works He had created, and pronounced them very good. But it is not said that He *rejoiced* in them. When, then, is this to be ? When *sinners are consumed out of the earth*, and the wicked are no more. Then "Bless the Lord, ● my soul ! *Praise ye the Lord !*" 31—35.

Of this Isaiah also is a clear witness. God means to cut off His foes : they shall be burnt. But Israel shall be restored as at the first ; and Jerusalem, that was in his day the evil city, shall be the faithful metropolis—"the city of the Great King : " Isa. i, 24—31 ; Matt. v, 35. Jesus shall come as Jehovah in fire, and the place of His furnace is to be in Tophet. But then Israel shall prosper in his land, nature shall sympathize in their joy. The sun and moon themselves shall increase their light : Is. xxx, 18—33 ; xxxii. The Lord shall deal vengeance to His foes. He will come with fire, and the slain of the Lord be many. But there shall be joy to Jerusalem, and the friends of Israel. The Gentiles afar off shall be taught, and all nations shall come up to worship at the temple of

Jerusalem, and then go forth and see the terrible furnace of Tophet, and the sufferers in its fires : Isa. lxvi.

Then the Saviour speaks of the lot of the righteous, "the children of the kingdom," counted worthy of that age, and of the resurrection of the righteous : Luke xiv.

"*They shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.*"

The coming and the kingdom of Christ go together : Matt. xxv, 31, 34 ; 2 Tim. iv, 1. When the nobleman returns, having received the kingdom while in heaven, he comes to earth to exercise it. First he judges his servants, and appoints them their places of rule in it, according to their doings and sufferings for him now. Then his enemies are slain in his presence. And his servants go forth to reign with him the thousand years : Luke xix, 11—27 ; Rev. xx.

The righteous shine as the sun. Here is the change of the body of their humiliation into the likeness of Christ's. They like Himself are risen from the dead, in immortal bodies.

But what is this "kingdom of their Father ? " Where is it ? God means in the fulness of the period of His counsel to gather together into one, heaven and earth, in Christ as head over all : Eph. i.

The millennial kingdom will have its two great departments ; the *heavenly*, for those risen from the dead ; and the *earthly*, for those still in the flesh : 1 Cor. xv, 39—42.

But as in these words of ver. 43, we find Jesus speaking of the risen, their place is in the heavenly department—"the kingdom of their Father." They are the sons of God as being the sons of the resurrection. The resurrection does not come, till this Gospel-day of grace is finished by Christ's return.

It is, we observed, the purpose of God to gather together in Christ as head all things both in heaven and earth in the fulness of the times of His counsel :

Eph. i, 10. As yet heaven and earth are of opposite sympathies. And the coming day of wickedness will still enlarge the gulf. When heaven rejoices over victory won, earth is called to mourn because of Satan's power: Rev. xii, 12. When earth sorrows, heaven is called to rejoice, and shouts Hallelujah: Rev. xviii, 8—20; xix, 1—7.

A hint of the future day of the union between heaven and earth in the person of Christ was given when Melchizedec the priest-king 'made like to the Son of God,' met victorious Abram, and blessed him in the name of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth: Gen. xiv, 17, 18.

A still more vivid type of that day was given, when Jacob the pilgrim and stranger in the desert beheld the ladder which united the earth and the heaven: Gen. xxviii. From the top of it the God of his fathers promised that he and his Seed should possess the land whereon he lay, and all families should be blest in his Seed, 'which is Christ.' Now this dream Jesus indirectly expounded to the candid and guileless Nathaniel, after he had confessed him to be—'the *Son of God*, and the *King of Israel*.' John i, 49. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." For Nathaniel in these two titles of Jesus had unwittingly touched the two ends of the ladder. Jesus as the *King of Israel* touches the earth; as the *Son of God*, the heaven is His place. And the angels of God are to be His, the messengers of His kingdom, the executioners of His purposes. It needs no proof, that this promise has never yet been fulfilled. Israel of old refused and refuses still Jesus to be their king. The heaven is still shut, and none has *seen* it open. Nor have angels been *beheld*, as promised, ascending and descending on the Son of Man.

But the day must come. And God has prepared in

the cxlviiith Psalm a song of praise for the heaven and the earth. "Praise ye the Lord from the *heavens*:" 1. "Praise the Lord from the *earth*:" 7.

It is commonly thought, that a happy period is coming upon the earth, the result of the Church's energies in the use of means confided to her; and that the preaching of the mercy of God in Christ, will at length result in the conversion of all the world. The Old Testament and the New alike deny this. "Let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness:" Isa. xxvi, 10. It is when *judgments* sore and terrible cut down the transgressors, that the inhabitants of earth will learn righteousness: Isa. lix, 16—19; xxvi, 9; Rev. xv, 4.

And the parable we have been considering lends its sufficient testimony. It embraces the whole period between Jesus' preaching on earth as the Sower of the good seed, and His return as the Reaper with His angels. Where, then, is the millennium before He appears? Does the field become all of one character during the time of the Householder's patience? Do all the tares become wheat? At His coming does an unbroken expanse of corn greet His eye? Alas, no! The effect of divine patience and mercy is only to allow false Christians to display their anti-christian tempers, blasphemies, crimes to the full. Gradual progress in unbelief and wickedness goes on, till the final ripeness of the evil in doctrine and practice is attained. Then comes the awful separation of the good from the evil by the might of angels, at the command of Christ descended from on high, and seen as the Son of Man, the visible Lord of earth.

Instead of the preaching of men there will be, then, arrest by angels; instead of the present time of mercy's proclamation there will be judgment in its terrible execution.

The field is then entirely cleared both of wheat and of tares. Christianity, whether in reference to its true

subjects, or its false professors, is removed from off the earth, never more to appear. The field is never resown. Jesus does not again hide himself in the heaven. Israel never thenceforward turns away in unbelief. A new economy, not of faith, but of sight takes its place. Justice, with the rod of iron breaks in pieces the transgressor. Satan is shut up and unable to deceive the nations. And after his brief hour of release, and his attack on the holy city, he is shut up in the lake of fire for ever. The new heaven and earth wherein righteousness is to dwell for ever, have taken the place of the old. The Lord perform His word !

THE END.

THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED EXPLAINED

By
Robert Govett

THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED EXPLAINED.

Matt. xiii, 31, 32.

"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, the kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown it is greater than herbs,* and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the heaven † come and lodge in the branches thereof."

In the thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel are seven parables, five of which are left unexplained. Of these five the Parable of the mustard-seed comes first, and is one of the most important, as is evident from its being found also in St. Mark and St. Luke.

All these parables relate to the mysteries of the kingdom of God. And they are fulfilled or fulfilling now: for this is the time of the Kingdom in mystery: Mark iv, 11. The kingdom of God has two states, that of mystery, and that of manifestation: the present is the time of the kingdom's existence in mystery; but the day of Christ's appearing and of the restoration of the Jews, will be the time of the Kingdom's *manifestation*. The kingdom of Messiah was seen by the Jewish prophets, in its time of manifestation; but in its time of mystery it was not revealed to them. Hence the gospel is called "the mystery which was hid from ages and from generations but now is made manifest to the saints:" Col. i, 26. Hence, too, of our Lord's parables it is said, "I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world:" Matt. xiii, 35. By this mark then we can tell when an interpretation of a parable is false. If the interpretation make it speak only a truth known before to the Jewish pro-

* Μείζον των λαχανων εστι. † Τα πετεινα του ουρανου

phets, it cannot be the true meaning of the Lord Jesus.

All the commentators that I have seen, are unanimous that the Savior meant to show by the present parable that his religion from very small beginnings, would spread over all the world. But this offends against the principle just established. In this view of it, the parable would offer no *new* information to the disciples. The Jewish prophets had foreseen the kingdom of Messiah, extending over all the earth: and to Daniel and to Nebuchadnezzar had been revealed both its commencement and its close. "Thou sawest till that a *stone* was cut out without hands—and the *stone* that smote the image, became a *great mountain, and filled the whole earth*:" Dan. ii, 34, 35. Besides which, the smallness of the commencement of the Savior's religion was a fact open to their senses. The disciples of Jesus, as all knew, were few in number. Of the two points then of which the parable is supposed to consist, one was evident to their senses, and the other familiar to them, the subject of their constant expectations; and the failure of which was the reason of their disappointment in Jesus of Nazareth.

This then was no secret or mystery, much less anything to be concealed from the multitude. It is something which lies on the surface, and is gathered at the first glance, from the words themselves. But shall we think that the secrets of God are more easy to discover than a riddle put forth by man? Can every eye detect at once without search what God declares he has concealed? This shows that its true meaning has not been set forth.

On this interpretation again, meaning is seldom given to "the fowls of the air." What are they? Lastly, Christianity's spread is not that of a tree's growth, uniform and constant, retaining what it has won and still proceeding onward. Where are now the Christian churches of Asia and Africa?

Let us then endeavour to give an interpretation which will fit the Savior's words in every part, and will present to the believer a secret of God, till then unpublish-

ed to the world. And may the Spirit of the Lord God bless the consideration of it!

Now this parable is concerning the secret of a Kingdom: and it turns entirely on the vast difference in point of greatness between the seed sown and the plant springing from it. It is the glory of a Kingdom that it should be *great*. And the word of God speaks of *greatness* as belonging to certain things in a kingdom: whence it would follow, that the union of these great things in a kingdom would bespeak it great.

1. God's word then speaks of *riches* as *great*, and a *part of the greatness* of a King and his Kingdom. "Both these *Kings'* hearts shall be to do mischief. . . . Then shall he return into his land with *great riches*:" Dan. xi, 27, 28. Thus also saith Solomon, "I gathered me also *silver and gold and the peculiar treasure of Kings* and of the provinces; *So I was GREAT*:" Eccl. ii, 8, 9.

2. Greatness is also spoken of *power*. "Behold," says Joseph, "my master hath committed all that he hath to my hand, there is none *greater* in this house than I:" Gen. xxxix, 9. And again, when he is made ruler over Pharaoh's Kingdom, "Thou shalt be over my house and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be *greater* than thou:" Gen. xli, 40. "The dragon gave him his power and his throne and *great authority*:" Rev. xiii, 2.

3. The greatness of a Kingdom is also said to consist in its *population*. To Israel, therefore, Moses writes, that God was going before them on their way to Canaan, "to drive out nations from before thee, *greater* and mightier than thou art:" Deut. iv, 38. while they were "the fewest of all people."

4. Greatness is spoken of *fame*. "I will bless thee and make thy *name great*:" Gen. xii, 2. "I have made thee," saith God to King David, "a great name, like unto the *name of the great men* that are in the earth:" 2 Sam. vii, 9.

5. Greatness is also spoken of those powers of resistance, by which Kingdoms repel insult or injury, as

ARMIES AND WARS. "Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made *great wars*:" 1 Chron. xxii, 8. "Neither shall Pharoah by his *mighty army and great company* make for him war:" Ez. xvii, 17.

We have thus seen wherein the *greatness* of a Kingdom consists, and from thence we can easily tell the *reverse*. Accordingly littleness is spoken of political insignificance; the want of wealth, honor, or influence. "And Saul said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the *smallest* of the tribes of Israel? and my family *the least of all the families* of the tribe of Benjamin:" 1 Sam. ix, 21. "And Samuel said, when thou wast *little* in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee *King* over Israel:" 1 Sam. xv, 17, where the *King* is set forth as the *greatest* in opposition to the least—the most insignificant of his subjects. So the political insignificance of the commencement of Antichrist is contrasted with his universal rule at last. "Out of one of them came forth a *little horn*, which waxed *exceeding great* toward the south and toward the east and toward the pleasant land. And it *waxed great even to the host of heaven*:" Dan. viii, 9, 10. The reader may further consult Mic. v, 2; Is. lx, 22; Amos vii, 2; Obad. 2; Jer. xxx, 19; Ps. cxix, 141.

Now in this parable, the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a grain of mustard-seed, which is "less than all the seeds that be in the earth," What then is meant by "the seed?" The Savior has informed us—"the seed is the word of God:" Luke viii, 11. It is "the word of the kingdom:" Matt. xiii, 19. For while the Kingdom is in mystery, only its *principles or doctrines* are put forth and left to their results. No *power* openly carries them into effect, and establishes them as the ruling principles of the government of the world.

We may observe then as the ground of comparison, that every kingdom has certain doctrines or principles as its foundation. Some have held it as a fundamental principle, that the nation should be an assembly of warriors, and have considered every child the property

of the state, to be trained publicly to hardihood, the use of arms, and the thirst for martial glory. In some states none but soldiers or priests were noble, and admitted to the government. In some states commerce and wealth are the leading aim, and the foundation laws express the principle, which is carried out into its results. The kingdom of Jerusalem during the time of the crusades, was founded on the principles of knighthood, which sought glory in feats of arms, and resented a blow as an affront not to be wiped out but by the blood of the offender.

"The seed" then is the doctrine of Christ's Kingdom, and of this we read, that a "man took and sowed it in his field." Here again the same principles of interpretation hold as in the parables which Jesus has explained. "*He that soweth the.....seed is the Son of Man.*" "*The field is the world*:" ver. 37, 38. This seed he "took," for it was his own in one sense: or if we render it "received," it is true; for as he himself declares, "*my doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me*:" John vii, 16. His sowing it in his field is the committing his doctrine to the world which he had created, and then leaving it to its results. The doctrine was committed to men in the simplest manner, without pomp or power. It was not a rider's going forth armed and victorious: that figure represents Jesus in power, when the Kingdom is *manifested*: but now he is seen only as a noiseless, unpretending sower,* while the Kingdom is in mystery.

As then the seed is the doctrine of Christ, so is its peculiar characteristic especially noted. It is "*less than all seeds.*" "Which when it is sown on the earth, is *less than all the seeds that be on the earth.*" As then we have seen what *greatness* is, we are in a capacity to judge what *littleness* is.

* Luke speaks of the seed's place as a "garden." By this is meant Judea, the favored land of God, as a garden is more cultivated and highly valued, and oftener the place of the Master's presence than his field. So Cant. iv, 16; v, 1; vi, 12; Is. li, 3; Ez. xxxvi, 35. Accordingly the doctrine of Jesus was first taught in Judea.

The chief points of greatness in a kingdom have passed in review before us. The meaning then of these words is, that *the doctrine of the Savior would be more humble and lowly than the doctrines or principles of any Kingdom that had ever appeared on earth.* And is not this the case? Was ever such lowly doctrine held concerning the fundamental points of an empire's greatness?

1. The world thinks that *riches* are a part of greatness; and therefore seeks them. But the doctrine of the Lord Jesus concerning wealth is more self-denying, and contrary to worldly greatness than had ever been uttered. It is the doctrine of the kingdom,—“Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God:” Matt. xix, 23, 24. In place of encouraging the laying up of wealth as other legislators, he forbids it. “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth:” vi, 19. He teaches us even to sell that which is possessed and give it away. “Sell that ye have and give alms:” Luke xii, 33.

2. His doctrine concerning *power and authority* is of the same self-denying cast; the same opposition to worldly greatness. His disciples contended about this very point, “which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, the king of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors; *But ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger: and he that is chief, as he that doth serve:*” Luke xxii, 24—26. On another occasion Jesus set up a little child as a type of greatness in his kingdom. “The disciples came unto Jesus, saying, who is the *greatest* in the Kingdom of Heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said....*Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven:*” Matt. xviii, 1—4. See also xxiii, 11, 12.

3. Similar was his teaching concerning *the numbers of his subjects*, “Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and *few* there be that find it:” Matt. vii, 14. “Many are called but *few* chosen:” Matt. xx, 16.

4. Equally contrary to the doctrines of the world is his teaching concerning *fame*. He does not invite us to seek applause; nay, not even from good works: but teaches rather concealment. “*When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, that thine alms may be in secret:*” Matt. vi, 3, 4. “I receive not honor from men:” John v, 41. “How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another?” John v, 44.

5. The world reckons the nation great that can repel force by force, and send forth warriors and mighty armies. But opposed to the thought of worldly greatness is the doctrine of Jesus. Far from returning evil for evil or repelling violence by violence, they are not even to resist evil. “I say unto you that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also:” Matt. v, 39, 40. “*Love your enemies; bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you:*” ver. 44.

Thus then it appears how “the seed” of Christ's Kingdom is “*the least of all the seeds that be upon earth.*” Many philosophers and legislators had sought to repress man's desire for greatness in some of these ways: some teaching a contempt of riches, and some a love of retirement in place of the bustle and hurry of power; but none ever taught so humbling and self-denying a doctrine as Jesus upon every point of worldly greatness.

Such then was the doctrine, as it was committed to man. The parable proceeds to specify the results of it. Its influence upon the conduct of those who profess the doctrine answers to the shooting of the seed. If,

for instance, any teacher should go through England inculcating everywhere the doctrine, that all men are equal and that property is a sinful thing, and that every man should help himself to as much as he needs; then if discontent, and riot, and forcible appropriation of other men's goods took place, we should say it was the natural result of such doctrine; the genuine fruits of such seed. Thus the seed is doctrine; the plant, the result of doctrine, that is, *practice*.

Now between a doctrine and its results where it is received, the connection is quite natural; and in general answers altogether to the nature of the doctrine, just as naturally and as certainly as the plant answers to the quality and nature of the seed. Let it be the foundation principle of a Kingdom, that war alone confers nobility and greatness, and all aspiring spirits will instantly turn towards war.

But the parable before us insists upon the great and utter disproportion between the smallness of the seed and the greatness of what resulted from it. In the mustard-seed, our expectations, founded on the beauty and regularity of nature, are disappointed and thrown out.

From a small seed we expect a small plant to arise, from the least of seeds the least of plants. The seed of the moss is microscopic; so is the plant that springs from it. The seed of the gourd or melon is of a moderate size, so is the plant that takes its rise therefrom. But not so with the mustard-seed. Its small size seemed to have for ever sentenced its plant to be the lowly herb. This was its rightful place, to be a "pot-herb," (*λαχανον*), useful to man: Ps. civ, 14. For the Lord God, at the creation, established the limits of the different kinds of vegetables and animals—and set *herbs* by themselves, and *trees* by themselves. This was *good in God's sight*: as it is written—"God said, let the earth bring forth grass, the *herb* yielding seed and the *fruit tree* yielding fruit *after its kind*.....And the earth brought forth grass; *herb* yielding seed *after its kind*; and the *tree* yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, *after its kind*; and God saw that it was good:"

Gen. i, 11, 12. The mustard-seed, therefore, oversteps the limits assigned to its nature: it is *by nature* a *herb*, but it becomes, in fact, a *tree*. Now as this separation of herbs and trees was *good* in God's sight: *so must* the reverse be *evil*. The transgressing the limits of nature is evil, as surely as its dictates in the things of nature are good. "Doth not even *nature itself* teach *you*, that if a man have long hair it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given her for a covering:" 1 Cor. xi, 14, 15.

The regularity of nature is its glory. The orders of creation, both animate and inanimate, keep strictly to the limits of the nature which God has assigned them: and therefore, to find examples of obedient exactness to the law of their kind is easy. Thus the Apostle noticing the strictness with which trees bear only their own fruit, observes, "Can the *fig-tree*, my brethren, bear *olive-berries*, or a *vine*, *figs*? so can no fountain yield both salt water and fresh:" Jas. iii, 12. From this regularity of nature, the Apostle deduces the lesson that thus it *ought* to be with the children of grace. So when Jesus is insisting on the certain ground on which we may judge of a prophet's doctrine, he compares it to the same law. "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather *grapes of thorns* or *figs of thistles*?" Matt. vii, 16. Obedience to the limits of its kind, is the established order of nature: "They continue this day according to thine ordinances; for all things are thy servants:" Ps. cxix, 91. The *difficulty* is to find *an exception* to this divinely imposed order: and this, therefore, is the meaning of the Savior's two questions, prefixed to the parable both in Mark and Luke: "Whereunto shall we liken the Kingdom of God, or with what comparison shall we compare it?"*

* This is further confirmed by the other occasion on which our Lord used the same interrogation. Beholding the perversity of the men of his nation, their unwillingness to obey the Most High, and their obstinacy, which exceeded all expectation—he notices the same difficulty of finding any natural object that would at all set

Thus he intended to point out the *difficulty there was* to fix upon any object in nature that would illustrate the condition of the visible church. Had it but kept to the limits assigned it by its Founder, thousands of examples had been ready and at hand, for, throughout nature, effects answer to their causes. But where was anything to be found that overstepped the law of its nature? The best naturalist might be at a loss for a reply, for few indeed are the exceptions. But the Savior found one, and has presented us with a case, in which the effect does not answer our anticipations, arising from the knowledge of its origin and kind. Even thus unlike the bounds assigned by himself would be the growth of the Church. To a seed, a certain nature has been assigned by God, before it enters the ground: so were the principles that were to be the characteristics of his Church, already fixed by Jesus. To maintain those principles would be his Church's glory: to desert them, both its sin and its loss.

The *limits of the doctrine* of the Lord Jesus ought to have been the *limits of the practice of the disciple*. But as the mustard-seed raised itself above the level of its kind, and rose above the herbs of the garden, vying with the trees of the forest—a class of vegetation to which it seemed by nature to bear no affinity or likeness; so did the Lord Jesus perceive that the visible Church would entirely transgress the boundaries which his holy precepts, and principles, and example had fixed for it.

We should have expected, as the natural result of doctrines so self-denying and humbling as those of Jesus, that his disciples would have been the lowest, the most patient, the most despised, the meekest, the poorest, the most humble, the most patient, the most insignificant of men. Had the plant been like the seed, so would it have been. But the Great Prophet knew that it would not be so. He foresaw that his King-

dom in mystery, instead of being humble and useful as the herb, in place of being content with the limits he had assigned it, would altogether overtop and transgress them. For as surely as the Creator set natural limits to the respective sizes of the herb and the tree, so had the Redeemer set moral and spiritual bounds to his Kingdom while in mystery. Had his disciples but kept to his principles, they would ever have remained small and despised, and poor in the eyes of the world. But he who knew what was in man, foresaw that the results of his lowly doctrine in the unready hearts of men would be a religion and a practice of pomp and splendor, of power, riches, and self-indulgence, of numbers, and of fame.

He expresses, therefore, the result of his doctrine upon its professors in the way of contrast. It is, "INDEED *less than all herbs: BUT when it is grown it is greater than herbs.*" So also Mark compares and contrasts its difference when it is "*on the earth,*" and "*after it is sown.*" Its greatness then *comes from the earth and is earthly.*

Matthew further informs us that it "*becometh a tree;*" Luke that "*it grew and waxed a great tree.*" Here then are two points to be noticed—1st, its growth, and 2ndly, its final attainment. The Lord Jesus, therefore, foresaw and foretold that by *gradual and imperceptible degrees*, his visible Church and professed followers would advance to worldly greatness: and the general appearance of its greatness is described in the words, "*It becometh a tree.*"* The birds detected this change in its nature sooner than man, and enforced their right to take their abode in the branches of the tree. Now a *tree* is the scripture emblem of earthly greatness, of kingly power, wealth, and pride. Under this figure the greatness of Nebuchadnezzar is described. "I saw and behold a *tree* in the midst of the earth, and

* The herb occupies the lowest extremity of the scale of which the tree occupies the highest: 1 Kings iv 33. See also Prov. xv, 17. 2 Kings xix, 26. Luke xi, 42, and Matt. xxiii, 23, in further proof of their insignificance.

the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the ends of all the earth; the leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed off it:" Dan. iv, 10—12. Afterwards the interpretation is given, "The tree that thou sawest, which grew and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven. It is thou O King, that art grown and become strong: for *thy greatness is grown*, and reacheth unto heaven, and *thy dominion to the ends of the earth*:" 20—22.

In Ezekiel a *tree* is the subject of a "*parable*," and it is interpreted to signify a kingdom. "Son of man put forth a riddle, and speak a *parable* unto the house of Israel, and say, Thus saith the Lord God; A *great* eagle, with *great* wings, long-winged, full of feathers, which had divers colors, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the *cedar*: He cropped off the top of his young twigs. He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed it by great waters, and set it as a willow-tree. And it grew and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned towards him:" Ez. xvii, 2—6. Here the vine's humble stature is explained to signify that the Kingdom of Israel should not become politically great: or as the prophet expresses it, "that it might be base, (humble,) that it might not lift itself up, but that by keeping of his covenant it might stand;" v, 14. In this parable both the cedar tree and the vine represent kings, and height signifies greatness and pride.

Again, in the same prophet occurs the same emblem. "Son of man, Speak unto Pharaoh King of Egypt, and to his multitude, Whom art thou like in thy *greatness*? Behold the Assyrian was a *cedar in Lebanon with fair branches*, and with a shadowing shroud and *of an high stature*, and his top was among the thick boughs. The waters made him *great* Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long

because of the multitude of the waters, when he shot forth. All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations. *Thus was he fair in his greatness* Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, because thou hast lifted up thyself in height, and he hath shot up his top among the thick boughs, and *his heart is lifted up in height*, I have, therefore, delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen *to the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves for their height, neither shoot up their top among the thick boughs, neither their trees stand up in their height*:" Ez. xxxi, 2—5, 7, 10, 11, 14.

From this passage it appears that pride is set forth in the tree's exalting itself above the rest, and for this offence, judgment was to come on the great cedar—that is, the Assyrian monarch. The lesson which the Most High intends to teach is, that none of the trees seek to exalt themselves lest they meet with a like fate. Most forcibly then does the lesson come home to the mustard-seed. If the *trees* themselves, to whom it is natural to exalt themselves and to vie with each other, are not permitted to do so, how very unbecoming, preposterous, and deserving of judgment, must be the *HERB's* vying with the *TREE*!

We have in Holy Scripture emblems given us of the earthly and heavenly calling; or of the Jewish and the Christian standing before God. Israel is compared to a *tree*; the Christian to a *herb*. The Jew was a *nation*, chosen by God to be superior to the other nations of the world. It was therefore to be a tree among the trees; but its glory was to be a *fruit-bearing* tree, as distinguished from the statelier and prouder, but barren forest trees. Its emblem was the fig tree or the vine: Ps. lxxx; Is. v; Jer. ii, 21; Ez. xv, 2, 6. xvii, 6; Hos. x. 1.

But the emblem of the heavenly calling is the wheat or corn. Israel is a tree, whose glory it is to be established in the earth, to strike deep its roots, to throw

out wide branches and to spread abroad on the face of the earth. But the wheat has but slender roots just on the surface, sufficient only to support it. It is short-lived, an annual plant, remaining but seven months upon the field; (*Pliny*,) while the tree's glory is that it lasts for many years, and that it resists all attempts to root it up. The wheat as it draws to ripeness demands less and less of the moisture of the ground, and at length is perfectly dead to the earth.^{*} Beautiful emblem of the heavenly-mindedness of the advanced Christian. As it ripens too, it hangs its head the more, the heavier it grows, and bows to every breeze, fit symbol of the useful Christian in his meek non-resistance and humility! When fully ripe it is cut off from the earth and borne away to a mansion prepared for it. But the fruit of the fig-tree is plucked from off the branches, and the tree is left standing. The fig-tree's glory is to be full of sap, and to gather the moisture of the earth abundantly into its broad leaves and juicy fruit.

The assembly of the false Messiah and his followers is compared to the false vine, the vine of Sodom. *Now the ripeness of the grape is just the contrary to the ripeness of the wheat, it consists in full abundance of juice*, and thus shadows forth the full indulgence of the lusts of the flesh that will distinguish that evil race. And the doom of the grape is to be trodden down and crushed upon the earth, as the glory of the wheat is its being lifted up from it, which answers to the Christian's hope to be caught up to meet his Lord in the air.

Answerably to this, John the Baptist presents before us a double judgment of the tree and of the wheat; the one by the axe of temporal judgment, the other by the fan or shovel borne by Messiah's hand: Matt. iii.

From what we have seen then, the position of the mustard-tree is most ominous. It lies exactly in the way of judgment. For what are the objects against which the vengeance of the Lord Jesus at his coming will be let loose?

^{*} Hence it is said of the harvest, "it is dried up." ἐξηρανθη: Rev. xiv, 15. This word signify the *destruction* of the *earthly people*. Ez. xvii, 24; Hos. ix, 16.

Everything *high and lifted up*, saith the prophet: "the day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon *every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low: and upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up:*" Is. ii, 12, 13. The law that will be put in force at his coming, is, "*Exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high:*" (Ez. xxi, 26.) or as the Savior gives it in his own words, "*Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted:*" Matt. xxiii, 12. The doom then of the aspiring mustard-seed is fixed. For its self-exaltation it must be abased.

But there is yet a further point, of which all the three statements of the parable take notice. The *result* of its greatness was a natural one. Its size permitted the birds to roost in its branches, and to make their nests there. As long as it was a lowly plant there was no room for them, no shelter from the heat and rain. As long as there were no branches, they had nothing to cling to for support. This Mark notices, "It shooteth out great branches, so that the birds of heaven WERE ABLE (ὥστε δύνασθαι) to lodge under the shadow of it." But Matthew and Luke add, that so quick-sighted were the birds, that they took advantage of the opportunity thus offered, and came and actually abode there. "It waxed a great tree, and the birds of heaven *lodged* in the branches of it."

What then, are intended by the "*birds of the heaven?*" The Savior has taught us in his interpretation of the parable of the sower. "Behold the sower went forth to sow, and as he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the *birds* came and devoured them up:" ver. 3, 4. This is afterwards explained by the Savior, "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, *then cometh the WICKED ONE, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart:*" ver. 19. By the birds, then, are meant Satan and his angels. And these are the '*birds of the heaven,*' for Satan is "the prince of the power of the air:" Eph. ii, 2, and "*wicked spirits*" are in "*heavenly places:*" Eph. vi, 12. *margin.*

This exactly answers to their position and character: they are the *natural enemies* of the sower: just as evil spirits are *spiritual enemies* of the Lord Jesus. When any spot is sown, the birds fly down, and, unless hindered, spoil the sower's labour. Hence all interpretations are false that give a favorable meaning to the birds.

Again, their character is openly thievish.* They appear in the parable of the sower only as "coming" to steal. All coming to the Church before Christ's must be evil. Thus the enemy's coming in the tares, and the birds in the parable of the sower, "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them:" John x, 8. Here the past is put, as I judge, for the future—"All that shall come before my return:" For when did Christ's sheep exist before his first advent? So here also—"the birds of the heaven come" before Christ, and the plant of God's planting becomes a shelter for his enemies, an abode for Satan and his angels. And thus the result of this dispensation with regard to the visible Church, the temple of the Holy Ghost and of Christ, is the same as that of the Jewish temple when the Lord Jesus visited it, and described its corruption from its true design:—"My house shall be called the *house of prayer*: but ye have made it a DEN OF THIEVES:" Matt. xxi, 12.

But further—In the Apocalypse, we can show the "GREAT TREE" filled with "*birds of the heaven*" and its sad doom—its felling and burning. An angel is seen by St. John, who proclaims—"Babylon the GREAT is fallen, is fallen, and is become *the habitation of demons*, AND THE HOLD OF EVERY FOUL SPIRIT, AND A CAGE OF EVERY UNCLEAN BIRD:" Rev. xviii, 2. "And the kings of the earth shall lament for her, when

* Similar is the symbolic character of the birds under the Old Testament. They are the instruments of wrath and destruction, feeding on the unclean dead. "Thy carcase shall be meat unto all fowls of the heaven:" Deut. xxviii, 26. They are the ready polluters of sacrifice to God. "And when the fowls came down on the carcases (of the sacrifices), Abram drove them away:" Gen. xv, 11. They are types of deceit, "As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of *deceit*:" Jer. v, 27.

they see the smoke of her burning saying, Alas, alas, the *great city*, Babylon, the mighty city, for in one hour is thy judgment come!" It was this which caused the Apostle so greatly to wonder. He marvelled to see so great a tree sprung from so small and humble a seed. He wondered to behold the Church at first so lowly, and devoted to Christ, forsaking her betrothed husband and clothed in scarlet and kingly purple, and covered, contrary to his command, with "gold and precious stones and pearls," the guilty associate of the pleasures and magnificence of kings, emulating their pomp, and pride, and devotion to the earth! Justly therefore does vengeance come upon the great tree; for "*Every tree that bringeth not good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.*" But this tree on which is written "*Mystery*, Babylon the *Great*, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth," has no good fruit to show: it is nothing but a harbour and sheltering place for the enemies of the Lord of the field: therefore it "*shall be utterly burned with fire*:" Rev. xviii, 8.

Thus our Lord would teach us that there cannot be worldly greatness in this dispensation without its attracting and affording shelter and a habitation for his enemies.

There shall indeed come a time of greatness and of glory to the saints. "The Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom:" Dan. vii, 22. "The greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High:" 27. But now the charge is—"Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, who will *exalt you in due time*. Yea all of you be clothed with humility, for God resisteth the proud and giveth grace unto the humble:" 1 Pet. v, 5, 6. The mustard-tree's exaltation then is *self-exaltation out of due time*. "Be not high-minded but fear, for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee:" Rom. xi, 20, 21. "*Lowliness*" is the characteristic glory of the believer now: Col. iii, 12. Phil. ii, 3, and the law of our dispensation is, "Who-

soever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Thus Jesus beyond measure humbled himself, and therefore is exalted beyond measure; but this tree exalts itself, and so must be abased; Man may prefer the great tree to the lowly plant: but "that which is *lofty* (υψηλον) among men is abomination in the sight of God:" Luke xvi, 15.

In this parable the Great Prophet has shown that the true security of the Church had been its poverty, littleness, and insignificance: then it had not *attracted nor afforded shelter* to the birds.

The *mystery* of the parable is now easily seen. It is two-fold—first, that a religion of pomp and power, of pride and worldliness, should spring from precepts that taught and enforced a dying to the world. That an effect should answer to its cause is the established order; that it should *not* do so, is *mystery*. And secondly, that Christ's visible Church, which was designed to make war on his enemies and dislodge them from their possessions, should afford to them a convenient habitation and an undisturbed roosting-place and fortress! This is indeed marvellous! At first, in its poverty and apparent insignificance, the Church of Christ gave the utmost disquiet to Satan and his kingdom: many were turned from the darkness of idolatry and from the power of Satan unto God: his angels were driven out from the bodies of men by the followers of Jesus everywhere: (Acts v, 16; viii, 7; xvi, 16; xix, 12:) and it seemed as if the kingdom of the Evil One were speedily about to be overthrown. But the Savior foresaw that his religion, which then was pure and unearthly and so sorely pressed the forces of Satan, would soon become worldly, and afford to him and his angels an habitation where they might most securely abide, and from whence they might put forth their schemes of seduction and destruction. That the visible Church of Christ which was instituted by Jesus in pursuance (after its measure) of the great end and aim of his own manifestation, that "it might destroy the works of the devil," that this should so lose all sense of its design, as that Satan

should choose it as his place of lodgment and should find it a fitting abode for himself and his angels, this is indeed a *mystery* worthy of Christ's foresight and prediction!

If we saw a prince superintending the construction of a mighty fortress, carefully planned by himself, and placed on the confines of his dominions, in order to repel and control the motions of a powerful adversary, and to effect a covert whence his soldiers might go forth to the attack of his foe—if we saw thousands of workmen employed, vast stones brought, and no expense spared to make the whole complete, we should be disposed, perhaps, to congratulate him on the certain success of his scheme. But if he should reply with a sigh—"Nay, do not congratulate me; this mighty fortress, which seems so necessary to my kingdom's glory and security, will become one day a stronghold for my foes: and the garrison will so far forget my orders and their duty as to give them free entrance and lodging, while they will not cease their assaults on my domain," this would indeed be a *mystery*. It is the very one here set forth.

Further confirmation that this is the true interpretation of the parable, may be derived from another source, *its position*: for, though *nothing is taken for granted*, but the meanings assigned to the "seed," the "field," the "sower," and the "birds," on which the interpretation rests, are those given by the Lord himself, yet a few confirmatory words may be devoted to the consideration of this particular. It stands then (in common with all those in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew,) in a most ominous and unfavorable place. Before this time the Savior had taught openly: but the twelfth chapter discloses to us the deadly bitterness of the rulers of the Jews, which burst forth in blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Then followed an instant change in our Lord's manner: he declares their sin incapable of forgiveness; and setting forth the fierce malignity that prompted the dread accusation, he changes his tone, and now speaks no longer openly, but in *parables*; that

"seeing they might see and not perceive." "What then? *Are we better than they!* No, in no wise." How is it then that the Savior is supposed to predict of his kingdom in mystery none but *great and glorious things*? Did he, while he turned from the *Jews* in indignation and sorrow at their sin, anticipate nothing but glory, and obedience, and purity for his Church among the *Gentiles*? If he did, he were in decided opposition to his Apostles, who all foretold errors, heresies, worldliness, and the falling away of many.

The place of the parable in St. Luke is not less unpromising and ominous. It occurs just after Jesus had healed a woman of Israel on the sabbath-day. At this the ruler of the synagogue was indignant, and bade the people come and be healed on the six days of the week and not on the sabbath. "The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou *hypocrite*, doth not each one of you on the sabbath-day loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? and ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, to be loosed from this bond on the sabbath-day? And when he had said these things, all *his adversaries* were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced, for all the glorious things that were done by him. *Then said he*"—and the parable of the mustard-seed and the leaven follow. Now this scene was in principle the same with that which the mustard-seed exposes. The law of Moses was a doctrine or seed given of God: but here it is quoted against the Lord that gave it. It is become *the stronghold whence Satan attacks the Lord Jesus through his enemies the Pharisees: and the rulers of the church of Moses are seen in league and amity with Satan, in hindering the work of Messiah*. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil; but the ruler of the synagogue sides with the evil one against the Lord himself, and would have retained this daughter of Abraham yet longer in bondage. Here then was an "*adversary*" of the Lord, (and "*adversary*" in Hebrew is "*Satan!*") sitting in the place of rule, and taught by Satan to resist the Lord: Nor was

he alone: "*all his adversaries* were ashamed." The birds then thickly roosted in the tree of Moses, and beneath its shadow they sat with great delight. The Savior therefore in sorrow anticipates the same scene in his own peculiar visible Church. He beheld the spirit of dominance and pride that was exhibited here, issuing its commands in opposition to the Lord; he beheld the ruling powers there in league and friendship with Satan hindering the Lord's work under a fair show, and though "*adversaries*," still calling themselves friends, and resisting the Lord's will. In this case, moreover, the question of the *leaven* comes in, for the ruler was impeached by the Lord as a "*hypocrite*" covering evil designs under a fair pretence; and "*the leaven of the Pharisees is hypocrisy*."

On the historical fulfilment of this parable little need be said. Every ecclesiastical history informs us, that by imperceptible steps, as time rolled on, the visible Church became more and more worldly. Christ had taught his Apostles to constitute the church of each town independent of that in another, and thus he recognizes them in the Revelation: Acts ix, 31, xv, 41, xvi, 5. Rom. xvi, 4—16 Rev. i, 4—11, &c. But human wisdom incorporates them under one earthly head, and thus we have the *one trunk* of a tree. And in this tree there are great branches, continually subdividing into smaller and smaller ones, till we reach the twigs and the leaves. Thus then we have the image of a regular decreasing gradation of power and wealth; a hierarchy answering exactly to the political orders of the world.

In the Church of Rome, as the most corrupt of churches, this state of things is most fully seen. Of the pride and avarice, the power, fame, and worldliness of the popes, history is full: and the contrast between the humility of the origin of the power, and the greatness, worldliness, and princely rule of it, struck even an infidel with astonishment. Speaking of the Pope's first open reception of political power, he says, "The world beheld for the first time a CHRISTIAN BISHOP invested

with the prerogatives of a TEMPORAL PRINCE; *the choice of magistrates, the exercise of justice, the imposition of taxes, and the wealth of the palace of Ravenna.*" Again, looking at cardinals—some of the *great branches* of the tree, he writes, "Rome was divided into twenty-eight parishes: and each parish was governed by a CARDINAL *priest or presbyter*, A TITLE WHICH HOWEVER COMMON AND MODEST IN ITS ORIGIN, HAS ASPIRED TO EMULATE THE PURPLE OF KINGS."

But this state of things is not confined to the Church of Rome alone: wealth, power, fame, palaces, retinues, a place in courts and in legislation, are found in our own country attached to *dignitaries* (as they are called) of the visible Church. And yet some of them are holy men, who do not perceive the opposition between their position and that to which the laws of Christ would confine them. They do not notice that wealth, political distinction and authority, were prizes which the Tempter offered to the Savior, and were refused by Him. They are slow to observe, that while the Church of Christ was poor and unnoticed, a place in it was not coveted by the worldly; but as it grew in wealth and learning, and political distinction, its dignities and splendor formed a prize which the earthly aimed to possess: and thus *the greatness of the visible church is at once a proof of its corruption, and the reason of it. Its becoming a tree first attracted the birds; and as long as it is a tree, so long will the birds dwell in it.*

The Savior, therefore, looking down on the professing Christian Church, must complain, as he sees how dissimilar is its state from that which his precepts would have made it, in the words of Jehovah to the Jewish Church, "*I had planted thee a noble vine, WHOLLY A RIGHT SEED: HOW THEN ART THOU TURNED INTO THE DEGENERATE PLANT OF A STRANGE VINE UNTO ME:*" Jer. ii, 21. How preposterous then to take the actual condition of the Church at any time after the Apostles' decease, as a model of what it OUGHT to be!

THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN

EXPLAINED.

BY
R. GOVETT.

Third Edition, Revised.

THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN EXPLAINED.

THE ordinary interpretation of this parable is, that the religion of Christ Jesus will silently and insensibly make the whole world holy : changing its nature from *evil* to *good* by the gentle influence of doctrine and example. It is, perhaps, on the seeming authority of this parable more than any other part of Scripture, that millennarian doctrine is resisted ; and many good men are found to contend, that by the means already in use, the world will be ultimately converted to the faith of Jesus, and the glory of the latter days draw on.

In proof of this, let us take the interpretation of the parable as given by a much admired and much trusted writer. "Leaven changes not the substance of the meal in which it is hid, but materially alters its qualities : it so impregnates the meal, as to transform it, as it were into its own likeness. Thus does the gospel affect those who receive it into their *hearts* ; it makes us partakers of a divine nature. It does not indeed essentially change either the faculties of the mind, or the members of the body ; but it communicates to them a new life and power, a new direction and tendency. The more this leaven works within us,

the more are we changed into Christ's image from glory to glory. Leaven, when it has begun to work, never ceases till it has leavened all the meal. Thus does the gospel also work in the *hearts of men*. The man is made altogether a *new* creature; *old* things are passed away, and all things are become new." "Thus will the *world* also be *regenerated by the grace of the gospel*. This leaven has long been put into the great mass of mankind; it has already raised a ferment throughout a great part of the world, and in due season shall leaven the whole lump. Though its progress be but slow at present, it shall work till it has pervaded every soul, and brought all nations to the obedience of faith." Similar is the exposition given by Scott.

But the fatal error of this interpretation is, that it exactly inverts the uniform meanings given to the *leaven* and the *meal* respectively. 'Leaven' here is made to correspond to the *glorious gospel* of the blessed God: while in Scripture it is ever taken as the sign of *false doctrine*, or *evil practice*. And the 'meal,' which in Scripture has always a *good* sense, is by these interpreters made to signify either the *corrupt heart*, or the *corrupt world*. The very texts quoted bear witness to the inversion. How can the introduction of the "*old leaven*," which transforms all into *its own nature*, figure the *new* creation, and the passing away of all that is *old*?

The parable represents a transformation *either of good into evil*, or of *evil into good*. If we invert the places of these, we obtain an interpretation *exactly the reverse of what the Saviour intended*. How careful should we be, therefore, to give the leaven and the meal respectively the significations which they uniformly receive in other places of God's word! For it results from the structure of the parable that such a mis-interpretation does not, as in other cases, produce nonsense, but only an exactly reversed view of the

Redeemer's prophecy. And Mr. Scott confesses that "leaven is generally used in Scripture as the emblem of *corrupt doctrine*, or *wickedness*." If then we take the leaven and the meal in their Scripture sense, we have one interpretation; if we reverse their respective meanings we get another and an opposite interpretation. If we run counter to the Scripture, the parable predicts that *the world* is to be *made holy by the church*. If we take Scripture as our guide, it foretells the *church made corrupt by the world*. With the awful prophecies of the Epistles and the Revelation sounding in our ears, who can doubt which is the true?

Again—if the point of the parable be supposed to be that the religion of Jesus will diffuse its own holy influence, this is *no mystery*: and if it be supposed to be that it will sanctify the whole world, the statement is not true. This were contrary to the whole current of the New Testament testimony: for there we are informed that in the last days iniquity will abound, and the love of the majority wax cold; that trials and persecutions unto death will be common; that many in those "perilous times," will depart from the faith; that they will be days like those of the flood, and of Sodom's corruption: Matt. xxiv, Luke xv, 1 Tim. iv. Moreover this dispensation is declared, in more than one passage, to be a dispensation of election; which is necessarily opposed to a time when *all* are saved.

But further, the action of the leaven upon the dough produces results which the Scripture judges as evil. The effect of leaven is to swell and puff up the mass into which it is inserted. Now the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, which especially presents to us the leaven in the church of Christ, and commands its purging out (chap. v,) offers to our notice this effect, which God regards as evil. They were "*puffed up* for one against another." "Some are *puffed up* as though I could not come to you—but I will come to you shortly,

if the Lord will, and will know not the speech of *them who are puffed up*, but the power :” iv, 6, 18, 19. “*Ye are puffed up*, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from you :” v, 2. “Knowledge *puffeth up*, but charity buildeth up :” vii, 1. Charity “is *not puffed up* :” xiii, 4. The expression occurs once more, and there is attributed to the evil of the fleshly mind : Col. ii, 18. The substantive related to the verb (which is but once used,) refers to this *same Church at Corinth*, and is mentioned among the various forms of sin then displayed amongst them. “I fear, lest, when I come I shall not find you such as I would, and that I should be found unto you such as ye would not : lest there be debates, envyings, wrath, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, *swellings*, tumults :” 2 Cor. xii, 20.

The last stage of iniquity manifesting itself in open apostacy from the truth is described in similar terms. “When they speak great *swelling words of vanity*, they allure through the lusts of the flesh :” 2 Peter ii, 18. “These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts ; and their mouth speaketh *great swelling words* :” Jude 16.

The leaven is sour dough, and its tendency is to produce its own nature, sourness. Now this word in the Old Testament, where alone it is used, is spoken of *the heart*, and signifies to *decline or turn aside*. “Their drink is *sour* : they have committed whoredom continually :” Hos. iv, 18. “Thy people have *corrupted themselves* : they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them :” Ex. xxxii, 8. So Deut. xi, 28 ; xxxi, 29 ; Judges ii, 17.

On the contrary, the emblem whereto the Saviour compares true Christianity, is something whose tendency is to *resist fermentation and corruption*. “Ye are the *SALT* of the earth.” Moreover, the destiny of the dough after it is leavened, points out that it is ready for judgment and wrath. As treading awaits the

ripened grape, and the wine-press is the wine-press of wrath : so the *oven and its fire* await the fermented dough. Now what does this betoken but the judgments of Christ’s coming ? “Behold the day cometh that shall *burn as an oven*, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble :” Mal. iv, 1. “Thou shalt make them as a *fiery oven in the time of thine anger* :” Psa. xxi, 9.

In proof of the MEAL having a good meaning in the Scripture, we may observe, that it is the basis of half the sacrifices of the temple. Offerings of flour were continually commanded by the same God that forbid leaven. And on one occasion we find meal made use of to counteract the effect of poison. “And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds, his lap full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage ; for they knew them not. So they poured out for the men to eat. And it came to pass as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out and said, O man of God, there is death in the pot. And they could not eat thereof. But he said, *Then bring meal*. And he cast it into the pot : and he said pour out for the people, that they may eat. And there was no harm in the pot : 2 Kings iv, 39 — 41.

But the ordinary view will be more clearly seen to be false, when we have examined the true interpretation. The parable, as given by St. Matthew and St. Luke, runs thus :—

“Another parable spake He unto them : The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened :” Matt. xiii, 33.

“And again He said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God ? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened :” Luke xiii, 20, 21.

First then, as the parable is given both by Matthew and Luke, is not a *Jewish* parable. Secondly, these

parables were uttered by the Lord after the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost by the Pharisees and rulers of Israel. The rejection of the Holy Spirit was the virtual rejection of Jesus; for He was one with the Holy Ghost, and by the sacred Spirit's inspiration did he utter his words, and work his miracles. The kingdom of Jesus therefore could not at that time dawn on Israel; and as long as the nation remains impenitent, the kingdom which is promised to Israel, cannot be *manifested*. But yet the kingdom was *already come* in mystery: (Matt. xii, 28,) its king, its laws, its mighty powers ("powers of the age to come") had already been displayed. Shortly after it was to be exhibited as the Christian church—a body visibly governed by Christ's laws, submitting to and reverencing Him, and openly exercising His supernatural gifts. This is the time then of its being "a kingdom within a kingdom." For though Satan is the Prince of the world, Jesus has faithful subjects within his dominions.

Now is the time of the *principles* of the kingdom, of the reception of those doctrines on which it will be ultimately founded, and of the exercise of those tempers in which its glory will principally consist. But these principles are not now actually supreme in power; nay, they are despised and trampled upon by the world, and even by many of the professed followers of Jesus. No *power* is put forth on God's part to compel all to adopt them, or else to be themselves cut off. But this must and will be the case when the kingdom is fully come. Thus we arrive at the important distinction of the *kingdom in mystery*, and the *kingdom in manifestation*. The kingdom in manifestation will consist of two classes of blessings, the *earthly* and the *heavenly*. The earthly blessings of prosperous harvests and fair weather, of the taming of wild beasts and the ceasing of disease, were promised to the earthly people—the Jews. Hence, when they refused to believe, the *earthly* blessings were cut off, and the kingdom could

not *appear*: for the earthly blessings are those apparent to the senses. But there was another class of blessings, in which the kingdom will mainly consist—the heavenly. These are the graces and gifts of the Holy Ghost. The latter then might come, even when the earthly people were cut off; for the children of faith who are the heavenly people, are now being gathered. Therefore we may call the present dispensation "the kingdom of heaven," if we will only understand it of the kingdom *in mystery*. All the parables of this chapter relate to "mysteries" or secrets concerning the kingdom while in its state of mystery. But when the Kingdom of God is actually come, which is at the last or seventh trumpet, "*the mystery of God is finished*:" (Rev. x, 7,) because it is openly manifest to every eye.

I. These remarks being premised, let us approach to the interpretation of the parable. And may the Holy Spirit bless it, for Christ's sake! The first question which arises is, What is meant by the LEAVEN? Both the Old and New Testaments give testimony concerning its nature.

1. LEAVEN was a thing forbidden to the Israelite so long as he was keeping the feast of the Passover. "Seven days shall ye eat *unleavened bread*: Even the first day ye shall put away *leaven* out of your houses: for whosoever eateth *leavened bread* from the first day till the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel." "Seven days shall there be no *leaven* found in your houses; for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger or born in the land. Ye shall eat nothing *leavened*: in all your habitations shall ye eat *unleavened bread*:" Ex. xii, 15, 19, 20. "Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the Passover unto the Lord thy God thou shalt eat no *leavened bread* with it and there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coasts seven days:" Deut. xvi, 2—4.

2. *Leaven* was forbidden also in the temple and worship of the Lord. "No meat offering which ye shall bring unto the Lord shall be made with *leaven*: for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the Lord made by fire:" Lev. ii, 11. "This is the law of the meat offering it shall not be baked *with leaven* it is *most holy*:" Lev. vi, 14—17. It might not be offered with the blood of the sacrifice. "Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice *with leaven*:" Ex. xxxiv, 23. So Ex. xxiii, 18.

3. Leaven was a thing of Egypt, which the Lord would have his people to leave behind when they were led forth from the house of bondage and of idolatry. "They baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened: because they were thrust out of Egypt and could not tarry: neither had they prepared for themselves any victual:" Ex. xii, 29. Here it is implied that Egypt's bread was prepared with leaven, and that had Israel tarried there, theirs would have been leavened also.

This is the view of leaven as given in the Old Testament. Let us now turn to the New. Its voice and testimony concerning leaven is entirely confirmatory of the view given by the Old.

1. The Saviour cautions the disciples against it. "Then Jesus said unto them, *Take heed and beware of the leaven* of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." "How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the *doctrine* of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees:" Matt. xvi, 6, 11, 12. Leaven, then, is *false doctrine*. On another occasion Jesus again uttered the same caution. "He began to say *unto His disciples* first of all, *Beware ye*

of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy:" Luke xii, 1.

2. The Christians of Corinth and Galatia are both warned against it by the great Apostle of the Gentiles. "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*? *Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened*. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; Therefore let us keep the feast, not *with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*. Therefore put away from yourselves that wicked person:" 1 Cor. v, 6, 8, 13. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised Christ shall profit you nothing. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whoever of you *are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace*. This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*:" Gal. v, 1, 2, 4, 8, 9.

The uniform testimony then, both of the Old and New Testaments concerning the leaven is, that it is an evil thing.* And the main doctrine concerning it, to be collected from the above passages, (which the reader

* There is an apparent, but not real, exception to this. The wave loaves of fine flour were offered (Lev. xxiii, 17,) baked with leaven. On this I would give the remarks of an able Christian writer. "With the leavened cakes which represented the Church sanctified by the Holy Ghost to God, but still living in *corrupted human nature, a sin-offering was offered*: for the sin-offering of Christ answered for, and put away the leaven of our corrupted nature." Again, leaven was used in the peace-offerings: Lev. vii, 13. On this also take the remark of the same writer. "That offering which represented the communion of the church in the sacrifice of Christ, necessarily brought in man, and the leaven was the ordained symbol of that leaven which is ever found in us."

should study for himself in their context,) is, that by leaven is meant evil doctrine—of two classes—(1) that of the *Pharisees*, or an attachment to forms and ceremonies, with the self righteousness of *the law*, which was rebuked in the churches of *Galatia*: and the other, (2) that of the *Sadducees*, the leaven of unbelief and of *lawlessness*.

I. The leaven of the *Pharisee* is *hypocrisy*; a fair pretence and show of wisdom and righteousness covering an evil and proud heart. The other leaven is lawlessness, and refusal to believe and obey. The Epistles to the Corinthians display the leaven in its form of lawlessness. The various subjects treated of in turn, display the many corruptions that were abroad in the church. Schisms—the setting up of human wisdom and eloquence—the consequent resting on the simplest elements of the faith—the setting up of men—the spirit of judging—uncleanness—law and lawsuits—fornication—abuse of liberty—covetousness—leaning to idolatry—abuses of the Lord's Supper, and of the Spirit's gifts—want of love—abuses in worship—denial of the resurrection. In a word, the flesh was manifested and tolerated among them—they were "*carnal*:" 1 Cor. iii. Paul shows the effect of the leaven in its puffing them up: (chap. iv, 5,) while he also presents our position as keepers of the passover. And his last Epistle shows that there were among them, both resistance to the Spirit's authorized officers, and false apostles; and the whole is concluded with a threat of judgment against offenders. This threat (and indeed the whole of the lessons to be derived from the Epistles in question) is the more significant because the address of the first of the two Epistles is *universal*: 1 Cor. i, 2.

But leaven, whether in one form or the other, is *Egyptian*. And Egypt represents the world; and Israel's leaving Egypt and passage through the Red Sea is shown by St. Paul to type and foreshadow the baptism of the Christian Church, and its dying thereby

to both the law and the flesh. And the law and the flesh are now both alike things *of the world*.

That which the Holy Spirit commands to be purged out must be evil. When then Paul writes—"Purge out therefore the old leaven," he describes the leaven as evil. "Because I have purged thee and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be *purged from thy filthiness* any more:" Ezek. xxiv, 13. "Dearly beloved, *let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness* of the flesh and spirit:" 2 Cor. vii, 1.

But the point of view in which the sin is seen most clearly, is by regarding the mystical position of the present dispensation. Leaven was forbidden in the house *only during the feast of the Passover*. But that is exactly the place and time which by a spiritual eye we are seen to occupy: "For *Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*." The obligation to abstain from leaven lasts during the time of the feast, and that time still continues. The woman's sin, therefore, spiritually stated, is the use of leaven during the feast of the Passover. Hence I gather assuredly that all interpretations of this parable must be false, which make the leaven or its effects to be *good*.

Leaven is either false principles, or evil practice opposed to the gospel: Matt. xvi; Luke xi. It also includes the persons that hold the one, or practise the other: 1 Cor. v.

II. But we are informed that "a woman took the leaven." Who is the *woman*?

First, I would observe, that in this series of parables, wherever *good* is done, a *man* is represented as doing it; and with but one exception, that man is the Lord Jesus Christ. Why then is it not said of the leaven that a *man* took it? The change is highly significant: for there was no necessity in the structure of the

parable, *men* being bakers as often as *women*. This of itself should lead us to suspect her person and act to be evil. For if it were right, then Jesus did not complete His work.

Secondly, few will suppose her to be a literal woman : for neither the meal nor leaven are literal. But there are only three mystic women mentioned in the New Testament—out of which it will be easy to make a selection. Now among the mystic women of the Old Testament is found one, whom I am led to regard as identical with the woman before us. She is shown to the prophet Zechariah, (chap. v,) undergoing transportation to the land of Shinar; but no explanation is given who she is. She is therefore left under mystery, no less truly than the woman of the parable. And that which makes me judge her to be the same as the one in question, is, that she is found in connexion with an ephah. Now an ephah is the measure for corn and meal: Lev. v, 10; vi, 20; Num. v, 15; xxviii. 5; Judges vi, 19; 1 Sam. i, 24. And an ephah is equivalent to “three seahs” (*sara*)*—the quantity of flour which the woman in the parable is said to have had in her power. I suppose, then, that the woman of Zech. v, is the offender of this place, driven out from her paradise, like Eve, after the forbidden thing had been taken. She is like Achor† removed from the camp, and brought to the valley of Achor, in order to be burnt with fire: Joshua vii. Now as the ephah

* On the equivalence of three seahs to an ephah, see Ex. xvi, 36, in the Septuagint. Also three seahs (or an ephah) seem to be the quantity prepared for guests or presents: compare Gen. xviii, 6; Judges vi, 19; 1 Sam. i, 24. It is taken for granted in Horne's Introduction.

† That the name of the offender is properly Achor עֲכֹר is clear, (1) from 1 Chron. ii, 7, where it is so written. (2) From Joshua's play upon his name, יְעֹכָד יְדֹרָה verse 25 (3) The Septuagint and Syriac read Αχαρ, with ‘r’ and not ‘n.’

in Zechariah is declared to represent the iniquity* of “all the earth,” so by the three seahs, which are the equivalent to the ephah, I understand *the earth* also, only regarded in its three divisions, as distributed among the three sons of Noah. The use of the definite term “seah” (σαρον) instead of one more general, as “measure” (μετρον,) seems to imply that something equally physical is intended to answer thereto. Moreover a measure is something quite external to the meal, although the meal is meted out thereby. Even thus the localities of the globe, or the various divisions of the earth, are quite independent of the being of the saints. But if the foregoing observations are correct, this was an intimation that the gospel would have a wider spread than Judea; and answers to the Saviour's command to His disciples—“Go ye therefore and teach *all nations*,” and to the still later vision of John—“Lo a great multitude whom no man could number, out of *every nation* stood before the throne and before the Lamb:” Rev. vii, 9. I think also that the meal being taken in its relation to these measures, denotes that the church is taken in its worldly or visible aspect of number and quantity.

The three mystic women of the New Testament are—the earthly Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem, and great Babylon or Rome.

1. The woman before us cannot be the earthly Jerusalem: for she was revealed before; this is a “thing kept secret from the foundation of the world.” Also because *she* took not the leaven, but rejected it, as we find in Acts xv.

2. Nor can it be the heavenly Jerusalem, because she has no power on earth; where the kingdom in mystery now is. Besides *she* is called “the *holy* Jerusalem:” Rev. xxi, 10. “And there shall in no wise

* I read עֵינָהּ for עֵינָהּ with the Septuagint, Syriac, and Coptic: Zech. v, 6.

enter into it anything that defileth, neither worketh abomination :” ver. 27.

3. It remains, then, that she is Babylon—the mystic woman that is presented in the Revelation. And this may be set upon a firm basis of proof. For the Revelation answers to, and is the interpretation of, these parables—the manifesting and clearing up of the secrets contained in them. For in these parables of St. Matthew, Jesus, like Moses, puts a “*veil on his face*,” that “seeing they might see and not perceive.” But the Apocalypse (or Revelation,) signifies “*the taking off a veil* :” and thus it gives the explanation of what here is mysterious. And it will be found that every one of these parables has something corresponding to it in that book.

But other evidence may be adduced, that the woman before us signifies Rome.

1. “The woman is the *the glory of the man*,” (1 Cor. xi, 7,) but the man is the “image and glory of God.” Now, of the three cities mystically described as women, which best represents “the glory of man?” Rome, it must be answered. In her history and within her walls have been gathered whatever attracts the fleshly eye and heart of man; riches, power, fame, luxury, pleasure, learning, empire.

1. As the parable is a *mystery*, so is the woman’s name—“MYSTERY, Babylon the great :” Rev. xviii, 5. And as the parable of the mustard-seed is connected with that of the leaven, so is the same “great Babylon” conspicuous in each.

3. The woman takes the forbidden leaven and mixes it with the flour. She is responsible then for all its evil results, and is the author of them. So is she characterized in the Revelation as “THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH :” Rev. xvii, 5. We may justly argue, therefore, that if Babylon be the mother of the abominations of the earth, and if hiding the leaven into the meal be

an abomination, then does it proceed from her as the mother—and the woman of the parable is no other than Babylon the great.

4. The woman occupies the place of power. Both leaven and flour are under her hand and direction. She is active; both leaven and flour relatively passive. Now such is the aspect which Babylon the great holds. “*The woman which thou sawest is the great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth* :” Rev. xvii, 18. The parable relates to the times of the Gentile dispensation, and in it Rome is the reigning head of the Gentiles. During it, Jerusalem, the capital of the Jews, is trodden down and deserted, and divested of power; for these respective heads are opposed to each other, as being the capitals of opposing kingdoms. When Rome was exalted, Jerusalem was oppressed; and when Jerusalem is “the city of the great King,” Babylon is “found no more at all.” From this also we can see that the woman is no holy person; for, as has been shown in the parable of the mustard-seed, worldly rule and authority among disciples during this dispensation, are things not according to the mind of Christ. Until Christ comes, the only scriptural exhibition of the saints is, that they are trampled and oppressed. Besides that the rule is worldly, is seen by the taking of the leaven, which is a thing of the world—its great essence and characteristic.

5. The inspired history of Christianity leaves it at Rome. After Jerusalem will not receive the witness of Jesus, it is conveyed to Rome, as the next sphere appointed by the Lord Jesus. “Be of good cheer, Paul, for as thou hast testified of me in *Jerusalem*, thou must bear witness also at *Rome* :” Acts xxiii, 11. “Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to *Jerusalem*, saying, After I have been there, I must also see *Rome* :” xix, 21. At Rome, in the Epistles also, we take leave of the great Apostle of the Gentiles. Now in Rome we have both the leaven and the meal.

The meal, as the Epistle shows—"To all that be *in Rome beloved of God*, called to be saints:" Rom. i, 7. And the heaven is there also. The heaven of the *flesh* was at Rome from the very first. And the relics of the *law* were transported to Rome as a further heaven, when Jerusalem was destroyed, and the temple furniture borne in triumph. What woman but Rome had both kinds of the heaven? "And so we went towards *Rome*." At Rome the Jews are cast off as a nation, and the Gentiles taken in for the time of this dispensation. "Be it known therefore unto you (Jews) that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it:" Acts xxviii, 28.

6. Moreover she is seen punished for this her sin in the Revelation. "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, the great city, because she made all nations drunk with the wine of the fury of her fornication:" Rev. xiv, 8. But of this more hereafter.

7. She is a woman (*γυνή*), a word which implies that she is married (1 Cor. vii, 34.) She is not a widow. Babylon rejects that name. "I sit a queen and am *no widow*:" Rev. xviii, 7. Hence her husband is not Christ, but one of the world: and her condition agrees with that of Babylon.

8. This parable is the last of those delivered by Jesus to *the multitude*, the remaining ones being uttered before *the disciples in the house*. Hence it seems highly probable, not to say certain, that the three former parables presented such a view of Christianity as might be noticed by even a worldly eye: and this we found to be the case as regards the parable of the mustard-seed. The remark then holds good here also, and by this criterion we may decide that the woman in question is not a *covenant*, (as in Gal. iv,) for that would require the eye of a believer. But suppose this to be the imperial city that filled the eye of the world, and at once we perceive the possibility of its being seen by the multitude. Rome's influence

upon Christianity in corrupting it, is a scene which the infidel himself may trace.

Now as Jerusalem during the millennium is to be the city of *God*, whence the streams of truth are to go forth to the nations (Isa. ii,) so is Rome the centre and city of *man*, whence, during the period of mystery, the debasing tide of worldliness and corruption flow forth.

III. We are next informed that the woman "*took*" the heaven.

The taking seems to imply ownership. "We will *take* our daughter and we will be gone:" Gen. xxxiv, 17. "They *took* double money in their hand:" xliii, 15. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which *took* their lamps:" Matt. xxv, 1.

But the heaven is forbidden, and the taking of that which is forbidden is sin, meriting punishment. Such was the offence of Achan. (Achor.) The spoil of Jericho was forbidden. "Ye, in anywise, keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest you make yourselves accursed, when ye *take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse*, and trouble it:" Joshua vi, 18. "But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan *took of the accursed thing*." "And Achan answered Joshua and said, indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done. When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and *TOOK THEM*; and, behold, they are *hid in the earth in the midst of my tent*:" vii, 1—21. Thus the accursed thing is both *taken* and *hid*, as in the parable: and the camp of Israel was defiled and troubled thereby, as the meal is here.

Like this was the case of Saul. God sent him utterly to destroy Amalek, and to slay everything they had. But the king and the people coveted the for-

hidden thing, and "the people *took of the spoil, the chief of the things which should utterly have been destroyed:*" 1 Sam. xv, 21. Similar were the cases of Nadab and Abihu: Lev. x, 1, 2; and of Korah and his company: Num. xvi, 18—35.

But the chief and especial reference here seems to be to the first sin in the garden of Eden. The Lord had uttered a warning against the tree of knowledge. "Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." But "when *THE WOMAN* saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, *SHE* took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat." As the consequence of this sin, Adam and his wife "*hid* themselves" among the trees of the garden. The agent in the first sin was a literal woman, because the tree was literal, and the dispensation generally was that of the letter; but now the dispensation is spiritual, and the thing forbidden is so also. But the sin still consists in *taking* the thing forbidden. In the leaven, moreover, are contained all the reasons for the act which moved Eve to the sin in Eden. The leaven is "the lust of the flesh—the lust of the eye—and the pride of life." She took the leaven—it was not in the meal at first: The gospel as it came from the hands of the Lord Jesus was pure. "*Ye are unleavened.*"

IV. "And hid it into three measures of meal."

By meal is meant the saints of God. This was the basis of the mincha or meat offering to God: Ex. xxix, 40, 41. And even thus Christians are to present themselves "*a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God:*" Rom. xii, 1. Flour is of the same even character throughout. So are Christians to be. "One is your leader, the Messiah; and *all ye are brethren:*" Matt. xxiii 1. Thus its equableness of nature sets

forth the equality of believers as brethren, and its innumerable flakes the "multitude which none can number." Their glory is to be united: and their usefulness then begins. But their principles are not to be the common and worldly ones; for these are selfish, earthly, forbidden. It was the glory of the Christian church to be cemented together as no society ever was before, on quite new and unearthly principles. They were to be a new and heavenly lump. Let the world's societies be joined together on the grounds of interest, natural relationship, and earthly birth; *they* were bound together as born again, children of the same heavenly Father, baptized into the same spirit of love and power. Leaven is the world's principle. But God has another, which He appointed in His offerings. The meat-offering with leaven is an abomination—*oil* is his element. "If thou bring an oblation of a meat-offering baken in the oven, it shall be *unleavened* cakes of fine flour *mingled with oil*, or *unleavened* wafers anointed *with oil*. And if thy oblation be a meat-offering, baken in a pan, it shall be of fine flour *unleavened, mingled with oil*. And if thy oblation be a meat-offering, baken in the frying-pan, it shall be made of *fine flour with oil:*" Lev. ii, 1, 4, 5, 7.

But the woman here adds leaven to the meal. It was the glory of the church that it had left all leaven behind it in Egypt. The return to leaven, therefore, is a return to Egypt: a falling back to the yoke of bondage, a conformity to the world, whence the church is called out.

That the woman regards not the command of God, is seen by the opposition between Christ's word by Paul, and her act. "*Purge out the old leaven.*" "*The woman took leaven and hid it into three measures of meal.*" Thus she is on Satan's side; not with Christ, but against Him; not gathering with Him, but scattering abroad. Her employment is like Satan's. The enemy came while men were asleep, and

sowed tares among the wheat. The woman corrupts by leaven the fine meal of Christ. Satan's work is permitted to come to maturity—"Let both grow together until the harvest." So is it here—"the whole was leavened." The object of Jesus was to keep separate His church from the world, "*to purify unto himself a peculiar people*:" Tit. ii, 14. Her aim is to make two things which He sought to keep asunder one; and she effects it.

V. She "hides it into *three measures* of meal."

Probably there is a reference to the history of the interview between Abraham and the three angels: for there we read of the patriarch's order to Sarah, "make ready quickly *three measures of fine meal*, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth:" Gen. xviii, 6.

But the real meaning of the number "three" seems to be a reference to the universal visible church: it is the same flour in all, but that flour is in three several measures. They are not actually divided thus, but they are capable of that division. "The whole" is made up of these "three."

Now the division of the world since Noah's day, is threefold. And Noah begat *three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth*:" Gen. vi, 10. "And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the Ark, were Shem, Ham, and Japheth These are the *three sons of Noah*; and of them was the *whole earth overspread*:" Gen. ix, 18, 19. When the Gentiles are to be brought into the church, "*three men*," seek Peter: Acts x, 19; xi, 11. The Lord Jesus, describing to His apostles the sphere of witness, makes a threefold division of it—"Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in *Jerusalem and in all Judea*—(the first division,) and in *Samaria* (the second,) and unto *the uttermost parts of the earth*:" (the third,) Acts i, 8. This is not indeed the same division as the former; but it is worthy of notice, as including beneath its triple division the universal church. The measurement given above is one into

which visible Christianity naturally fell; the Eastern church, the Western church, and the African church. And accordingly there were at first *three patriarchs*—the patriarchs of Alexandria, of Antioch, and of Rome, answering respectively to these three divisions.

The *three* measures of meal discover, I think, that the visible church of Christ had in some degree become corrupted before, for the three divisions of it are earthly divisions. As it came forth first from the hand of the Spirit it was but *one*. "There shall be *one fold*:" John x, 16. "That He might gather together *in one* the children of God:" John xi, 52. "We being many are *one body in Christ*:" Rom. xii, 5. "By one Spirit we are all baptized into *one body*:" 1 Cor. xii, 13. Yet I would not speak with full certainty: for the Saviour, speaking of His church, desires that it should be *one with the unity of the God-head*; and therefore there may be a reference intended to the Ever-Blessed Three in One. "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me *that they may be one as we are*." "The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, *that they may be one even as we are one*:" John xvii, 11—22.

Three is, moreover, the appointed number of measures for the meat-offering in the temple. "In the beginnings of your months ye shall offer *three tenth deals of flour, for a meat offering mingled with oil*." "In the fourteenth day of the first month is the passover of the Lord. And in the fifteenth day of this month is the feast; seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten Their meat-offering shall be of *flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals shall ye offer for a bullock*:" Num. xxviii, 11, 12, 17, 20, 26, 28.

Into these three measures of meal the woman hides the leaven.

This adds to the proof that the whole is evil. For

leaven is hypocrisy, and to it belongs concealment—but the Saviour teaches that this concealment would be but momentary. At the great day it would be brought to light. “Beware of the *leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy*: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed, *neither hid, that shall not be known*:” Luke xii, 1, 2. Hidden works moreover are *works of darkness*. “Judge nothing before the time until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the *hidden things of darkness*, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts:” 1 Cor. v, 5. The deed of the woman is not according to the will of Christ, nor is she any servant of His. For His command to His ministers, is not to hide but to proclaim openly the truths they had heard: Matt. x, 27. And Paul contrasts his “*manifestation of the truth*” with the “*hidden works of dishonesty*” in the epistle, which, as we have noticed, bears most on the subject of the leaven. “We have renounced the *hidden things of dishonesty*, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by *manifestation of the truth* commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God:” 2 Cor. iv, 2.

Herein we obtain a view of the transaction as it is regarded by God. To men the addition of leaven to flour seems quite fitting, and an improvement to both. Leaven by itself is sour dough, but added to meal it becomes palatable. Flour alone is pure, but unpleasant to the taste; the addition of leaven makes it light and pleasant. It is the common, the regular practice of mankind. But then these very principles are the condemnation of the act in the sight of God. Christianity was not devised to give ease to the flesh, any more than God gave the command to eat unleavened bread, because it was more agreeable to the taste. Far from it; it was called under the Old Testament, the “*bread of affliction*:” Deut. xvi, 3. And thus Christianity is the “crucifying of the flesh with the affections

and lusts.” The mixing of leaven with flour is indeed the ordinary practice of men. But it is the Christian’s condemnation to be living like men in general. “Seek not what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind, for all these things do the nations of the world seek after:” Luke xii, 29, 30. Here a practice is considered as sufficiently condemned by its being the common “course of the world.” Again, “Whereas there are among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and *WALK AS MEN?*” 1 Cor. iii, 3. The Christian’s glory is not conformity to the world, but separateness from it. “Come out from among them, and be ye separated, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing:” 2 Cor. vi, 17.

The men of the world see no crime, but rather advantage in the mixing of leaven with the meal. So indeed in a worldly point of view there was. When the Emperor of Rome established Christianity as the religion of the world, it seemed a great and advantageous thing for both parties. His empire was the more firmly established; and the Christians were no longer molested with perpetual persecutions, but being recognized by the state as its officers and friends, grew in wealth, importance, and power continually. But this ceasing of persecution, and attaining to power and consequence in the world, were in the sight of God only evil. His principles were such, that followed out, the words must stand good throughout the dispensation—“In the world ye shall have *tribulation*.” “We must through *much tribulation* enter the kingdom of God.” The churches were therefore abandoning their true position, in consenting to be established by Constantine. Then was leaven of corruption mixed with the meal. The introduction of leaven was seemingly a friendly act; and the union of church and state in Constantine’s day, was a pacific and friendly alliance. By the Christians of that day its

sad effects were not apprehended. They seeing, saw not; so natural is the sympathy between the flour and the leaven, that its corrupting tendency passed unnoticed. The leaven was hid, and we hear no note of warning or of remonstrance throughout the church. Ease from persecution, power, and splendour, was the desire of the flesh. The contrary was God's choice and the Saviour's; and when prudent but fleshly Peter would have rebuked our Lord for anticipating sorrow, he was set aside as doing Satan's work. "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me; thou savourest not (dost not relish) the things that be of God, but those that be of men:" Matt. xvi, 23. See also the same desire to avoid persecution, by mixing leaven with the meal, in Gal. vi, 12; "*As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.*"

The "old" belongs to the law; the "new" is the Gospel.

The LAW is *old*, as compared with the gospel. It is "the *old covenant*," (διαθήκη:) 2 Cor. iii, 14. And to it belonged "the letter" and carnal ordinances—old wine, suited to the old bottles: Matt. ix, 16, 17; xiii, 52.

The FLESH is "*old*," as compared with the "*new man*," regenerate by the Holy Ghost: Rom. vi, 6. And oldness and corruption are nearly related. "The *old man* which is *corrupt*:" Eph. iv, 22.

Now the *leaven* as related to the *meal*, must always be "*the old*" as compared with "*the new*." For leaven is not, as some seem to have supposed, yeast or some fermenting substance of a different character from the meal. Leaven is only *old and sour dough*. Therefore, Paul justly, and more than once, calls leaven "*old*:" 1 Cor. v, 7, 8.

It is clear, therefore, that the *law* and the *flesh* are the old leaven as opposed to the *Spirit* and the *gospel*.

Any introduction of the principles of the old dispensation into the gospel, and any bringing in of the natural and fleshly principles of the world into the church is the adulteration of the new meal by the old leaven.

Now, from the beginning it has ever been thus. The course of evil may be stated generally, as the *old* corrupting the *new*. God creates a new world, and pronounces it very good. But into this secretly enters "the *old* serpent the devil and Satan," and defiles it. God sets up a new dispensation at Sinai, but in forty days' time the old leaven of idolatry enters, and the covenant is broken, and the nation defiled. God bids Israel make a holy tabernacle, within whose curtains He may abide. He sends forth from himself new and holy fire, that it may burn for ever on His altar: Lev. ix. But Nadab and Abihu, (as we are informed at the commencement of the very next chapter) profane His offering with the old and strange fire. He set up a kingdom in the person of Solomon, but the old corrupts the new: the Gentile wives of the king introduce idolatry, and persuade him to his fall. The scene before us, therefore, to an instructed and spiritual eye, is nothing startling and unexpected, but the sad course of things in an evil world. As the snow descends from heaven of brilliant and spotless whiteness, but every hour that it lingers amid the city streets, contracts some new defilement, till at length it is scarcely discernible from the ordinary mud; so did the Saviour perceive that it would be with His most holy doctrine; to the utter loss, at length, of its original purity, mercy, and heavenliness.

VI. But we have to trace, in conclusion, the issue, "Until the whole was leavened."

"The "whole" is an expression used both of the church and of the world. "This gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the *whole world*; for a witness unto all nations:" Matt. xxiv, 14. "Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the *whole world*:"

Matt. xxvi, 13. "There should be great dearth throughout the *whole world*:" Acts xi, 28. "Your faith is spoken of throughout the *whole world*"—said of Rome: Rom. i, 8.

The same expression also describes the church. "Gaius mine host, and of the *whole church*, saluteth you:" Rom. xvi, 23. "If therefore the *whole church* be come together into one place:" 1 Cor. xiv, 23. "A little leaven leaveneth the *whole lump*:" 1 Cor. v, 6; xii, 17.

Now both these expressions apply in the case before us; the whole visible church, which is nearly identified with the Roman world, will be leavened. And this is testified of Babylon. "By thy sorceries were all nations deceived." She "did corrupt *the earth* with her fornications." How different and opposite to this was the first work of the church! As soon as the leaven appeared first, it was met and cast forth. Covetousness sought an entrance into the church at Jerusalem, in the persons of Ananias and Sapphira; but the Spirit resisted the entrance of the unclean thing, and it was cast out. It sought entrance again, in its other form of Judaism. "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." But here also it was met and ejected by the Holy Ghost. "Why tempt ye God to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

The leaven, in the form of Judaism, sought entrance also into the Gentile Church of Antioch. The apostle of the circumcision "before that certain came from James, did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision." But there the Spirit by Paul "withstood Peter to the face, because he was to be blamed," and the leaven was cast out. In its other form of lawlessness, evidenced by fornication, Paul met it in the church of Corinth, and thence he

ejected it also by the power of the Holy Ghost. "I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath done this deed to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh." "Wherefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person:" 1 Cor. v, 3, 5, 13. So again, 2 Cor. xii, 20, 21; xiii, 1—3. But it was foreseen, that after the apostles fell asleep, the leaven would enter unrebuked, and work undisturbed. It was in being, and even working, when the apostle wrote. "The mystery of iniquity doth already work:" 2 Thess. ii, 7.

How the gospel would be corrupted, was foreseen by the great Prophet of the church. He foretold that the evil would first come from without, and in a friendly form, and that thence the corruption of His church might be dated, and would go on incessantly till all was impure. He saw that evil would be introduced, not by force, but by a seemingly pacific and advantageous act. Christianity is a thing of principle, and He here foretells that it would be met and corrupted by the contrary principles of the world. He beheld the church made worldly, and so its witness against the world lost. He saw that by the introduction of the principles of Judaism, and the flesh, the *union of the Church and of the State* would be effected. This transaction, in Scripture language, is the *union of the church and of the world*. At once, then, the church loses its place. Christ had "chosen it *out of the world*." By uniting with it, its testimony against the world as evil and lying under judgment, is lost. *The world is made respectable, and the church is made worldly by the same act.*

The union, or rather oneness of Church and State *was good once*, when the whole nation was equally holy in God's sight, with the holiness of the flesh. *It will be good again*, when the whole world shall be renewed

in spirit, and clean in flesh. But in the present dispensation, in which the flesh is rejected, and only an election is gathered out of an evil world, the union of the church and of the world, or of the clean and the unclean—the subjects of Satan, and those of Christ—the leaven and the flour, is and must be *evil*.

The change produced on flour by the leaven hidden within it, is not a visible nor audible, but a real and secret change: it does not affect its bulk so much as its quality. So when the church was established by Constantine, the change in it was not immediate or visible, yet was it real. It had become a thing of politics, and so of the world. The same motives began to move among its members, that rule the current of state affairs. The leaven only required *time* to develop its powers. The *motives* were introduced, when it was allied to the State and privileged, and caressed; but the full *effects* required space of time to disclose themselves.

This second parable throws light upon the first. We saw the anomalous and unexpected growth of the minute mustard-seed into a tree, but this shows to what that unexpected growth is to be traced. The abandonment of its appointed nature we now see to be due to an earthly cause. It was the leaven of Judaism and of the world which occasioned the sad result.

The principles immediately affected by the introduction of the leaven, were those of *church union*. The principles of *individual salvation* were not at once affected; but the position of the church as given by Christ was at once changed. *Constantine* was now its head and lawgiver, and therefore not Christ.* He supplied its funds and honours; thus the church left its espoused bridegroom, and became the affianced of the State. To the emperor she yielded obedience, and by him laws were enacted, funds granted, and dignities

* No man can serve two masters.

bestowed. This answers to the estate of marriage, where the wife is bound on agreement and voluntary stipulation to obey *in return for a share of her consort's honour and continual support*. This sin and error against its true place in the present dispensation, has still continued in every established church. The evil effects proceeding from it have often been noticed, and cures proposed. But every one short of the return of the church to its state of dependence upon Christ and His Spirit alone, is vain; and reaches not the mischief. At the Reformation the principles affecting individual salvation were by God's mercy graciously restored; but the principles of Church union still remained only the old and leavened ones. Hence corruption flowed in once more, as was sadly visible in the reigns of several of England's sovereigns.

That this is no forced view introduced to serve a purpose, may be seen by presenting to the reader the statement of a writer of great powers, who composed a work expressly in defence and commendation of the union of Church and State.*

He first occupies himself in showing, that the Church and State are each sovereign and independent the one of the other. He then observes, that for mutual advantage a "politic league and alliance for mutual support and defence" is entered into.

The motive of the ruler to seek the alliance of the church, he declares to be, the service rendered to him in procuring reverence for himself and the laws, and the obtaining power over the church, so as to prevent it from exciting sedition or ill-will against his government.

The motive of the Church he represents as being, protection. "*The Church flies for protection to the State.*" The legitimate motive and "*benefit can be no*

* Bishop Warburton.

other than security from all exterior violence." The illegitimate motives that might, but ought not to affect the minds of churchmen in the compact are (2) the desire to propagate religion by force; and (3) the desire of riches, honour, and power.

From these motives the alliance springs, and the terms are—"That the Church shall apply ITS UTMOST INFLUENCE IN THE SERVICE OF (alas!) THE STATE!" and that for its part, "*the State shall SUPPORT and PROTECT the Church.*"

The Church in this alliance, as the weaker of the two contracting parties, must surrender, as he says, its *independence*, and receive in return (1) A settled maintenance for its ministers. This maintenance may be given in any way, but generally is in tithes, after the Jewish example: and the payment of these is not for the support of opinions, but "*for the use and service of the State as such.*"

(2) The second benefit is ecclesiastical power of coercion exercised in the bishops' courts. The resulting benefit to the State (which arises from its obligation to support the Church) is "THE ECCLESIASTICAL SUPREMACY OF THE CIVIL MAGISTRATE" with the bishops' seat in Parliament.

In this melancholy picture, we find the leaven of Judaism and of the world at every turn. The union of Church and State, the authority of the civil magistrate and tithes, are all argued from, and supported by Judaism. From that leaven the Church was strongly cautioned to abstain; but the Saviour foresaw that it would be in vain.

Let us then contemplate the results of this alliance to the Church, and see how utterly fallen it is from its true position as the waiting, pure, espoused virgin of Christ.

1. It seeks *protection* from an arm of flesh. And thus it deserts the protection of its Lord and Master, Christ Jesus, as though that were insufficient. It

wins to itself the curse: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm:" Jer. xvii, 5.

2. It becomes *supported by the world*, as though Christ were so ignorant or careless of its necessity, that he could not, or would not provide.

3. It takes ANOTHER HEAD AND HUSBAND THAN JESUS. The civil Magistrate is its head and husband by the terms of alliance; and as the Church cannot have two heads and husbands at once, Jesus is not only slighted, but rejected. This is that spiritual fornication and adultery of which Rome and her daughters stand accused: Rev. xvii, 2—5.

4. It therefore becomes obedient to the will of the magistrate. As the same writer states it, "When the alliance is made, and CONSEQUENTLY THE CHURCH UNDER HIS DIRECTION, *he hath then authority to prescribe such public exercises of religion, in such manner and such seasons AS THE EXIGENCIES OF THE STATE REQUIRE.*" Its ministers become in the main *his* ministers. "*The civil Magistrate being become protector of the Church and consequently supreme head and director of it, the MINISTRY IS MUCH IN HIS POWER.*" "*He admits and excludes to the EXERCISE OF THEIR FUNCTIONS AS HE SEES FIT.*"

5. It is incapable of action without permission. This is the consequence of "*the Church resigning up her independency, and making the Magistrate her supreme head without whose approbation and allowance she can administer, transact, or decree nothing.*" She can excommunicate none without the State's consent.

6. She receives and exercises *temporal* power instead of the *spiritual* power which her former Lord gave her; for the ecclesiastical courts are guided by the municipal laws of each country, and their forms of process are borrowed from the civil courts; while from these ecclesiastical courts an appeal lies to the civil power as supreme.

7. Lastly, the object of the Church is expressly declared to be—not the glory of God—not the service of Christ Jesus alone, but—the “service of the *State*,”—that is of the *world*! Thus is the object of the Church turned utterly aside. In place of witnessing to the world that it is evil, in rebellion against God, and soon to be visited by the coming wrath of Messiah, the visible Church believing that it is possible to serve “two masters,” joins hands and fellowship with it, and devotes herself to its service. She takes the civil governor as her head and ruler, in place of the Holy Ghost, whom the Lord Jesus left as its appointed guardian and guide. As Israel’s desire for a king was the rejection of Jehovah, so is the making a king the supreme head of the Church the rejecting both of Christ Jesus and of His Spirit. The power rejected is heavenly; the power chosen is earthly.

The issue of the alliance of the Church with the State (or the world) was most disastrous. Wealth and splendour, power and dignity followed. Worldly philosophy and eloquence crept in to corrupt the gospel. The rulers of the world interfered in the government of the Church, and consequently the principles of the world—law and justice—took the place of mercy. War was sanctioned. Priesthood arose: and with it the beggarly elements of the law, holy places and buildings—Jerusalem, Bethlehem, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; holy times—Easter, Pentecost, Christmas; and holy rites devised by men.

Of this we have a glimpse in the Church of Corinth and its reproof. Paul notices that they had stepped out of the place of their dispensation, and were “*full*,” and “*rich*,” and “*reigning like kings*,” “*wise*,” “*strong*,” and “*honourable*,” 1 Cor. iv; while he, on the other hand, and the other apostles, were in a state the very reverse.

As there are two forms of leaven, so there are two gigantic iniquities which divide the world between

them at the close (1) *lawlessness*, and (2) *bondage to the law*, or Christianity Judaized. The Judaizing of Christianity is seen in Babylon, the Great Harlot; the lawlessness of the visible Church discharges itself at length into the bottomless gulf of the delusions of Antichrist: Rev. xiii, xvii.

We may now just gather up the principal points of prophecy concealed beneath the veil of the parable. Jesus and His apostles sent forth into the world Christianity pure, and retained the Churches unleavened for awhile, by the spirits unceasing vigilance and activity. But our Lord foresaw and foretold that the mistress of the globe—all-conquering Rome, would reduce his Church throughout the earth to the low level of the world; and *that*, not by force of arms from without, but by a secret influence from within. At first Rome, with Satan as her instigator, tried to crush, by all the malicious and bloody arts of persecution, the rising religion. But those failed. Everyone that fell upon that stone was broken. She altered her mode of attack therefore, and approached in the garb of a friend, and like Satan in the Saviour’s temptation, offered the riches, and glory, and power of the world. But the Church had not the Saviour’s eye, and saw not things as they appear to the eye of God. She consented, and the leaven was introduced. The heavenly mindedness and purity of the Church was gone. In the three hundred years *before* the establishment of Christianity, it arose and spread through great part of Asia, Europe, and Africa, not only without worldly aid, but against the efforts of the mightiest of rulers. But three hundred years *after* human authority had set it up and endowed it, where were its light, glory, and purity? Ambition, dissension, false doctrine, sects, superstition, and lying wonders had utterly corrupted it. After that the world had established it, the blessed gifts of the Holy Ghost and his miracles, which were promised to all its propagators,

had ceased. God took away His heavenly jewels, when the woman had abandoned her affianced lord, and received and wore those of the earth.

The Saviour foresaw also that the introduction of worldly principles, while they would utterly destroy the original savour of the gospel, and of the church its depository, would yet be scarcely noticed. But he adds further, and this is the sad conclusion, that the result yet to come is, that the whole visible church throughout the world will be entirely corrupted by principles derived from Rome. Such is the sad scene which we behold in the Apocalypse. "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, the great city, because she made *all nations* drink of the wine of the fury of her fornication:" Rev. xvii, 2. And wide is her power. "The waters which thou sawest where the whore sitteth are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues:" 15. By thy sorceries were all nations deceived:" xviii, 23. "She did *corrupt the earth* with her fornication:" xix, 2.

This teaches that the working of the leaven in its last stage will be most powerful. A universal fanatical impulse will seize the souls of men in favour of Rome and her superstitions, and those that resist and remonstrate will pay the forfeit of their lives.

By the light of this parable we may draw some weighty conclusions. The present Romish movement in the Church of England* is viewed with anxiety by many, with hope by not a few. They trust, nay some prophecy, that 'after a while, this cloud will pass away, and leave the heavens clearer than before.' Nay, this is no *cloud*—it is *leaven*, leaven working untiringly among the meal. The issue of the process is determined for us by unerring wisdom and divine foresight. Do any inquire, which will prevail, Puseyism, or Evangelical truth? We answer boldly—Puseyism.

* This tract was written about the year 1845.

"What saith the Scripture?" "THE WHOLE WAS LEAVENED."

This is but a special instance of the great and terrible truth, so contrary to the flattering expectations of many, that the truths of the gospel are steadily advancing and destined to expel error. Nay, the very reverse is now nigh at hand. Read it in the words of one that cannot mistake—"THE WHOLE WAS LEAVENED."

By the same light we may also a moment glance at the doctrine of apostolic succession. That is itself a *Jewish* prepossession and prejudice, founded on no warranty of the New Testament, but solely on the order of succession after the flesh manifested in the Jewish high priests. We see in this glass of what value it is as the basis of the Church. *There is no succession in the visible Church but the successive* INFECTI-ONS OF LEAVEN. Those pernicious influences once introduced, have not ceased, nor ever will, until they have subdued to their influence the whole visible Church.

Lastly, I would say a few words upon the mystery of the parable. For if there be no mystery in the interpretation given, it is a proof of its falsehood. But here there are several mysteries. First, the woman herself is a mystery. Her name is "*mystery*, Babylon the great." Now, though Daniel had been presented with a view of the four empires, yet had he never seen that aspect of the fourth which is exhibited here. He had seen the fourth empire in the light in which it affected *the Jews*, "strong as iron; forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things . . . shall it break in pieces and bruise:" Dan. ii, 40. He beheld it in his own vision "devouring the whole earth, treading it down and breaking it in pieces:" vii, 23. He saw also the kingdom of Messiah in its relation to the four empires: but it was the kingdom in *manifestation*, not while in *mystery*. To him it was revealed as "breaking in pieces and consuming all these kingdoms and

standing for ever:" ii, 44. But he saw not the state of things here described. This is a view of Rome, prevailing not by arms, but by example and influence. Daniel saw Rome overwhelmed by the kingdom of God. Jesus describes it as corrupting by stealth his kingdom in mystery.

Again the Saviour describes the days of his coming as like the days of Noah, both in the wickedness of man and in the vengeance from God. Now the iniquity of the flood, whereby the "earth was corrupt" before God, began by the woman's touching the forbidden thing. So did the Saviour foresee and predict that the wickedness of men preceding his coming, and the vengeance that then would light on men, would spring from the sin of a mystic woman, who would "*corrupt the earth*" through her fornication.

Another mystery is, that the woman's act is not hindered, nor does the Saviour express any opinion concerning it, much less is any vengeance taken on her for it. The woman's sin in Eden was scarcely concluded, when both she and her husband, who participated in her guilt, are called before God and judged. But it is not so here; no hand hinders the entrance of the leaven; no voice is raised against it. It is not purged out when once hid within, nor its fatal leavening cut short by judgment. It is left to its natural conclusion—"The whole was leavened."

Now this befits the parable and the time of mystery. God's silence and apparent inactivity against the transgressor is a mystery. Especially it is thus with *this transgressor*. If the corrupter of Moses' law must die, how much more, we are ready to say, the corrupter of the gospel of the Son? But the time of mystery is the time of mercy, and therefore the transgressor is spared, till "justice go forth unto victory." The Apocalypse clears up for us this mystery, and shows that the act, though long unnoticed, is not forgotten before God. "Her sins have reached unto heaven, and God *hath*

remembered her iniquities:" xvii, 5. It describes to us fully the judgment on the woman; "She shall be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God that judgeth her:" xvii, 8.

How sad and humbling a thought that the history of this our dispensation is only the *history of leaven*! The Saviour does not say, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a woman which took leaven." This would have seemed the more natural expression. But the interpretation above given accounts for it. The woman is not the *kingdom of heaven*, but the *kingdom of the world*; and the parable describes her pernicious influence in corrupting the "children of the kingdom" of God. Nor does He say "The kingdom of heaven is like unto three measures of meal into which a woman hid leaven," because in the meal there is *no history*: *the agency is that of the leaven*; the meal is passive. *It is not that the flour is purging out the leaven; then the meal must have been the nearest object of comparison.* But now the kingdom in mystery displays nothing but a history of the working of leaven, corrupting the quality of the gospel, and misleading its professors; and the end and consummation of the whole is its unresisted dominion! Can the Gentile then boast above the Jew? "What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise."

How soon after the introduction of the leaven by Rome, under Constantine its ill effects became apparent, is noticed by an historian of the progress of Christianity. "Mankind, even within the sphere of of Christianity, *retrograded to the sterner Jewish character; and in its spirit, as well as in its language, the Old Testament began to dominate over the gospel of Christ.*"

PARABLE

OF THE

HID TREASURE

EXPLAINED.

I subjoin some heads of doctrine and practice, with the comparative change wrought in them by the leaven of Judaism and the world :—

JUDAISM.	CHRISTIANITY.	CORRUPTION.
Sacrifice—Altar	A Supper	Sacrifice—Altar
Priests	Elders	Priests
Consecrated Temple	Houses	Consecrated Churches
Vestments		Vestments
High Priests	Jesus	The Pope
Infant Circumcision	Baptism	Sprinkling of Infants
	Spiritual Gifts	Confirmation
Consecration of Priests	Laying on of hands	Ordination
Sabbath	Lord's Day	Sabbath
Passover		Easter
Pentecost		Whitsuntide
Jubilee		Jubilee
Cities of Refuge		Asylums
Union of Church and State		Union of Church and State
Oaths	Forbidden	Oaths
Harp, Trumpet, &c.	Spiritual Songs	Instrumental Music
Forms of Prayer	Inspiration	Forms
Tithes		Tithes
Justification by Works	Faith	Justification by Works
National Election	Individual	National Election
Justice	Mercy	Justice
Law Suits	Arbitration	Law Suits
Decalogue	Grace	Decalogue
Visible Succession	The Spirit's Energy	Visible Succession
Anointing of Kings		Coronation
War	Peace	War
Vows & Dispensations		Vows
Journeys to Jerusalem		Pilgrimage
Holy Water		Holy Water
Punishments, temporal	Spiritual	Temporal
Treasures, earthly	Heavenly	Earthly
Authority of Kings in things Spiritual	The Holy Ghost	Kings
National Religion	Individual	National
Miracles	Miracles	Frauds
Nazarites	Virgins	Monks—Nuns
Metropolitanism	Distinct Churches	Metropolitanism

THE HID TREASURE.

“ Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure that had been hid * in the field ; † which a man having found hid, § and for joy thereof goeth back || and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field : ” — MATT. xiii, 44.

1. Before entering on the interpretation of the present parable, I would notice first the insufficiency and inapplicability of those explanations which are ordinarily given of it. They are three in number :—1. The first affirms that the treasure is *Christ*, and the field the *Gospel*. But is Christ hidden in *the Gospel*? Is it not from beginning to end a *display* of his glory? Again, when a sinner has found Christ, is he to hide him? When the lamp is lit, is it to be put under the bushel or under the bed? Or yet further, is it necessary for one who receives the gospel to give up all that he has? Or can a man be said to *buy* the gospel? Is it not something *freely* offered and bestowed without merit?

2. The second interpretation supposes the treasure to be *salvation*, and the *Bible* to be the field. But this labours under difficulties no fewer or less considerable than the former. For is salvation *hidden* in the *scripture*? And when salvation is found, is it to be *hidden* by him who finds it? Is he not rather to testify of it

* Κεκρυμμένω. † Εν τῷ ἀγρῷ. ‡ Εἰρυσφε. § Ὑπαγει.

that others may find it also? And again, does it require him to sell all that he has in order to buy a Bible? And if the Bible be the field, many have no need to buy it, for they possess it long before they find the treasure.

3. A third interpretation of the parable makes the treasure to be the *Church of Christ*, and the field the world. Against this it is sufficient to bring one text of scripture. The treasure is hid by the finder. But what saith the finder of his saints? "*Ye are the light of the world: a city set on an hill cannot be hid:*" Matt. v, 15. But a modification of this opinion makes it *the real glory of the Church*. Against this I object—that while the field contains the treasure, the world does not contain within itself the real glory of the Church. That is hid with Christ on high. Again, the finder of the treasure buys the field. This would suppose the Christian to *buy* the world instead of *renouncing* it.

Let us now proceed to see if there be not some interpretation which will meet all the expressions in the parable.

I. There are three apparent difficulties in the way of its explanation, if we assume the same principles which have guided us before. If the field be the world, how can it be right to *buy* the world, when the Christian is rather required to give it up? And the second difficulty is, how can it be right in any to *hide treasure*, when in the parable of the talents one of the servants is represented as cast into outer darkness because he "*hid his Lord's money?*" Matt. xxv, 18. Or is it right to lay up "*treasure on earth?*" These three difficulties fix the interpretation, as incapable of being fulfilled, except by one person.

II. I suppose then, that as in the former parable, "*the field is the world,*" verse 38. The treasure is, I judge, the promised kingdom of Messiah. This seems to be implied in the very form of expression in the parable, "*The Kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure.*" Also because treasure is a kingly thing and the glory of a kingdom, as we see in the books of the Kings and the Chronicles, where continual mention is made of the

"*treasures of the king's house.*" This we read especially concerning David, "*And over the king's treasures was Azmaveth the son of Adiel, and over the treasures in the fields, in the cities and in the villages, and in the castles Jehonathan the son of Uzziah:*" 1. Chron. xxvii, 25. So it is written of Hezekiah. The King of Babylon sent to him ambassadors, and "*Hezekiah was glad of them, and showed them the house of his precious things, the silver and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was no thing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not:*" Isaiah xxxix, 2. Hence it appears that treasures are the glory of a kingdom, and may well be used to represent and figure the coming kingdom of God. For Solomon speaks of treasures as peculiarly a king's: "*I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings:*" Eccles. ii, 8.

It is also worthy of notice, that as, when God permitted kings to be set up over the children of Israel, we read of *their treasures*: so, *before that time, when God reigned as king over Israel*, ere the nation had, (in Samuel's day) rejected him, *he also had a treasure*: "*All the silver and gold, and vessels of brass and iron are consecrated unto the Lord; they shall come into the treasury of the Lord:*" Joshua vi, 19, 24.

Moreover as to Israel the kingdom was promised, so was *treasure* promised also. Treasure was promised as the blessing to be received, on fulfilment of the law. "*The Lord shall open to thee his good treasure the heaven:*" Deut. xxviii, 12. Further, to two of the tribes in the blessing of Moses, was it set forth as a subject of benediction. "*And of Zebulon he said, Rejoice Zebulon in thy going out! and Issachar in thy tents. They shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand:*" Deut. xxxii, 18, 19.

III. The connexion between treasure and the kingdom of God was seen in the reigns of David, Solomon, and Hezekiah; for as these were the most holy of the kings of Judah, so was the kingdom peculiarly glorious in their times; and while of other kings we read of their

voluntarily sending away, or by compulsion being robbed of, the treasures of the Lord's house or of the king's house, these alone are stated to have possessed and retained them. The treasures of these kings were *open*, because this was the period when the most High gave a glimpse of the glory of the coming Kingdom of the Messiah.

IV. But the treasure here spoken of "had been hid," which was the case with regard to the kingdom of Israel when Christ came. Promises had been given to Israel of a time of glory and dominion, in which the Jew was to have the pre-eminence over all nations. But though there were in the days of David and Solomon, some sparks and glimpses of such a thing, yet when Jesus appeared they had all vanished: David's line had long been cut off from the throne. The Jews were not even an independent nation. An Edomite was their ruler. They were impoverished and oppressed by the Romans. While then the word of God assured them of a kingdom and glory which should be theirs, and the nation believed in this treasure and sighed for it, there were no appearances that it was at all probable, or near at hand. There were indeed rumors and expectation, of buried and hidden riches, but the expectants were poor. The royal treasure was hid to the oppressed and trampled Jew: even though Judea was the spot wherein the treasure lay interred, and the region especially to be glorified by its being brought forth to light.

V. But if the treasure had been hid, *who* hid it, and *when*?

As the kingdom is God's, so did *he* hide it: for the proprietor of the treasure alone may dispose of it. And it is his glory so to do; as it is written, "It is the glory of God to *conceal* a thing:" Prov. xxv, 2. And when he hides, he digs deep; as it is written, "*O the depth of the riches* both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out:" Romans xi, 33. And he has hid much wealth therein, that it may strike the eye the more when displayed—"That in the ages to come *he might show the exceeding riches* of his grace:" Eph. ii, 7. And the

time of the treasure's concealment was the creation of the world. "Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my father, inherit the *kingdom* prepared for you *from the foundation of the world*:" Matt. xxv, 34.

VI. Of the treasure thus hidden we read next, that it "had been hid *in the field*."

The intended place of the kingdom of Messiah is to be the world; as the eighth Psalm, with many other places of Scripture, shews. "The Lord my God shall come and all the saints with thee. and the Lord shall *be king over all the earth*:" Zech. xiv, 5, 9. When the treasure is disclosed, the earth will be the seat of government, as the present chapter informs us, "The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather *out of his kingdom* all things that offend." It is true, that there are no appearances as if the kingdom of God were soon to take effect and extend over all the earth. For wickedness grows, and the laws and principles of the kingdom are despised and broken. This is in accordance with the statement of the parable; for now is the treasure *hid*. Men may walk day after day on the surface of a field and not know the wealth that lies beneath. The treasure hid is something that exercises the faith of the children of the promise and of the kingdom, and therefore the present parable is one of those addressed to the disciples in the house.

VII. It is next stated that a "man found" it.

In this expression however seemingly simple, there is much of depth. First, if by the treasure be meant the kingdom of God, *none but a man could find it*. No angel, of whatever class he might be, could ever have attained it: for from such God had purposely hidden it; "For unto angels hath he not put into subjection the habitable world in its future state,* whereof we are speaking. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is *MAN* that thou art mindful of him? or the son of *MAN* that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with

* Την οικουμένην την μελλούσαν.

glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet:" Heb. ii, 5—8. The treasure of the kingdom, therefore, could not be found by an angel, but only by a son of man. For while the law was given by angels, (Heb. ii, 2.) and much of the world's government is at present ministered by them, (as the books of Daniel and the Apocalypse show) the evil world being under the government of *evil* angels, (Eph. vi, 12.) as the saints are ministered unto by the holy angels:) so we are taught that during the age which is to come, the world will be ruled by *man*. In proof of it St. Paul quotes the eighth Psalm, which speaks in particular of the "Son of Man." All room for doubting who is intended by this title is removed by the apostle's further declaration that it is Jesus. Observe also, in confirmation of the Jewish aspect of the parable, that the announcement occurs in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*.

The man that finds it then is Jesus, "*the Son of Man*."* As in the other parables he is the prime mover, so in this also. Who is the sower? The Son of Man. Who scattered the good seed in his field? The Son of Man. Who cast the mustard-seed into his garden? The Lord Jesus, the Son of Man.

* It may well be deemed surprising that two parables so greatly resembling each other, as the Hid Treasure and the Pearl, should have so different interpretations as are given in these tracts. And, perhaps, it may be remarked as weighing strongly against them, that the "man" in the one parable is not the same as the "man" in the other. But in answer to this it must be replied, that the word in question signifies in the course of the present parables, persons so different and opposed as the Lord Jesus and Satan. Ver. 28. (Greek.) And, further, that the same word is used in the course of the very chapter before us, and in our Lord's application of the whole, in the signification that is attributed to it in the next parable—"Every Scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a *man*, an *householder*, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old" ver. 52. And, perhaps, we may meet this anticipation—that two parables so alike in their terms and structure should relate to nearly the same thing—by a contrary probability, that in so few parables retained and transmitted to us out of the many which the Savior uttered on that day, it were reasonable to suppose that they would rather relate, whatever their appearance, to different aspects of the Kingdom of God.

Now to him and to Adam is the manhood peculiarly and characteristically ascribed. "The *first man* (as though there never had been but *two* men,) is of the earth, earthy; the *second man* is the Lord from heaven:" 1 Cor. xv, 47. Between these two it is easy to decide. Whatever treasure Adam might have received in the way of dominion and rule, he lost. Therefore it can only be the second man that *found* it.

And in token of his being the finder of the treasure, no sooner is he born than treasures are opened to him. "And when they had *opened their treasures*, they presented unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh:" Matt. ii. 2. Before him at a later period, all the treasures of the world were spread. "The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the *kingdoms of the world and the glory of them*:" Matt. iv, 8. But the Savior knew that these were not his father's *hid* treasures, and he refused them.

This man *found* the treasure. Many had been looking for it, but not one before him had ever found it. One had searched everywhere, and has given us the result of his search. He was the wisest of men, and the best fitted by his position to discover it, had it been possible to the fallen. "I, the preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem, and I *gave my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven*." But he found the search vain. "When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth. . . . Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun, because, *though a man labor to seek it out, yet shall he not find it; yea, further, though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it*." And the reason was the great depth at which the treasure lay. "That which is far off and *exceeding deep*, who can find it out?" Eccles. i. 12, 13; viii, 16, 17; vii, 24.

And the reason why Jesus found and Solomon did not find the treasure, was that Solomon was a sinner, and Jesus is the Righteous One. For he who could find the kingdom must not only be a man, but a *righteous*

man. "*He that followeth after righteousness and mercy, FINDETH life, righteousness, and honor:*" Prov. xxi, 3. And who ever, like Jesus, followed after *righteousness and mercy*? He therefore is the finder. He found the treasure as being the Righteous One of David's line, to whom the kingdom was confirmed. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise *unto David a Righteous Branch, and a King shall reign* and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely:" Jer. xxiii, 5, 6. Also, that he is the finder of the treasure, is shewn by the testimony of John the Baptist, who notices, in addition, the vastness of the treasure, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given *all things* into his hand:" John iii, 35. This passage farther confirms the one cited from Hebrews—for that too described the treasure as being "all things"—"Thou hast put *all things* under his feet."

And, that Jesus is the finder of the treasure, we see by several acts of his life. For he that has found a treasure knows where to lay his hand on it when he requires. Hence, when he needed money for the tribute he sent Peter to procure some, "Go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, *thou shalt find a piece of money:*" Matt. xvii, 27. So when he needed a beast of burden to enter the capital of his dominions as king, he knows where to find that which he requires. "Go unto the village over against you, and straightway *ye shall find an ass tied and a colt with her:*" Matt. xxi, 2. To take but one more instance: after the disciples had toiled all night on the Lake of Galilee and caught nothing, he teaches them where they might at once obtain what they required. "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and *ye shall find:*" John xxi, 6.

When the treasure is open, he has promised some of it to the conqueror. "To him that overcometh will *I give to eat of the hidden manna:*" Rev. ii. 17. Here, therefore he describes himself as Lord of the hid treasure no less than the finder, and able to dispose of it

as he wills. Lastly, amidst the precious things of the treasure, and constituting a great part of it, *is redemption*, which Jesus also found. "He entered in once into the holy place, *having found* (ευραμενος) *eternal redemption* for us:" Heb. ix, 12. This passage again displays another glory of the finder, that he purposes to make use of the wealth so acquired, not for himself, but for others, "Having found eternal redemption *for us.*"

VIII. But the next announcement of the parable is, "Which, when he found *he hid.*"

The verb is in the past tense, not the present, as it would seem by the English translation. And this is of importance, because all the other verbs being in the present, it marks *the point of time at which the occurrence related in the parable, then stood*. The hiding was at that time past; the rest of the parable was then transacting or yet *future*.

But who is this that hides treasure, and is blameless? None could be so but one. None durst have done it but one. But this hiding, no less than the former finding, was according to the mind of his Father. As soon as Jesus had found the treasure, John the Baptist and the twelve are sent forth to proclaim—"Israel's promised treasure is found—the kingdom is at hand, and ready to be displayed—repent and believe the glad tidings."

But Israel refused to repent and believe. They would not give ear to Jesus, that the treasure was found, and that to him it belonged of right; but they asked incredulously, Where are the signs of it? Luke xvii, 20.

The treasure, therefore, though found, is covered up again. It must not be brought forth before the eyes of unbelief.

What induces men to hide treasures? The insecurity of property and life. Thus was it when Judæa was overspread with the destroying armies of Nebuchadnezzar. From the insecurity of property and life, men were naturally disposed to conceal their wealth. "Certain men came to Mizpah with offerings in their hands to the Lord." The greater part of these Ishmael slew, "But ten men were found among them that said unto Ishmael, Slay us not; for we *have treasures in the field*

of wheat and of barley, and of oil, and of honey :” Jer. xli, 8. As then, in the Babylonish invasion, treasures were hidden, because war and violence, iniquity and robbery, were abroad, and the lives of the possessors were in danger, so in the case before us. The time in which Jesus found the treasure was one of violence and iniquity : and the life of the finder being in danger, he was twice compelled to hide himself. “Then took they up stones to cast at him, but *Jesus hid himself* :” John viii, 59. So Luke iv, 30 ; and John xii, 36.

As then the finder was obliged to *hide himself*, no wonder that he *hid the treasure* too. The Father hid the treasure first, and now the Son, after having found it, hides it again. This was a sorrowful and mysterious thing. The sin of Judah obliged the finder unwillingly to cover up again that which would have enriched his nation and the world, with the long expected day of glory. And as the act of *opening and producing the treasure* would have been the day of *Jerusalem’s glory and brightness*, and superiority to every enemy, so is the *day of its hiding a time of sorrow and humiliation, and treading down to Jerusalem and Judæa*. The discoverer of the treasure could not cover it up again without tears.

‘And when he was come near, he beheld the city and *wept over it*, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least, in this thy day, the things which *belong to thy peace* ; but NOW THEY ARE HIDDEN FROM THINE EYES. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side ; and they shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee ; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another ; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation :” Luke xix, 41—44. The time of the treading down of Jerusalem is also the time of the *kingdom in mystery*, or of the *treasure hid* ; for Jerusalem is the “*city of the great king*,” and, therefore, its *low and depressed state* argues, that the *kingdom is not come*—that the treasure continues hidden.

Jerusalem’s glory and Messiah’s go together, Messiah’s departure therefore is a farewell for the present, to the

earthly glory. It cannot in unbelief be the world’s metropolis, the city whence the law and glory of the Lord were to shine forth. No, because of unbelief, it should not be established. Yea, it must be trodden down by the Gentiles, under the reign of the false Messiah, as it will rule over the Gentiles under the sceptre of the true.

God will make a “covenant of *peace*” with Jerusalem : Exod. xxxiv, 25 ; xxxvii, 26. But now it could not be fulfilled, for she rejected the things belonging to her peace—the Savior, and the Messiah through whose sacrifice alone the peace can come. Before the day of Jerusalem’s glory therefore, peace is taken from the earth : Rev. vi, 4. “*Now they are hid*,” though *hereafter*, through mercy, restored. This hidden purpose of God in purchasing the world through Jesus’ redemption, and putting off the day of their glory through their unbelief, startled and confounded them. They looked for the fulfilment of the prophet’s words, “*Arise ! shine ! for thy light is come !*” But they rejected the Sun, and therefore Jesus tells them, that “yet a little while was the light to be with them,” and then darkness was to settle over them, their souls, their prospects, their actual condition. They “trusted that it had been he which should have *redeemed Israel* :” Luke xxiv, 21 ; and so he did : (John xi, 57,) but the purpose of God reaches farther, and while Israel is left in unbelief, the heavenly calling comes in.

Even at the very time that the Savior sent forth the twelve, and afterwards the seventy, having put into their hands some specimens of the gold of the treasure, in the powers which he gave them against sickness and unclean spirits, he informs us that the reason why the promised kingdom was not manifested, lay in the unbelief and impenitence of Israel, especially in the unbelief of the great and wise ones of the nation. “Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, *because they repented not*. Woe unto thee Chorazin ! Woe unto thee Bethsaida ! At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou *hast hid these things* from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes :” Matt. xi, 20, 21, 25.

The hiding of the treasure had already taken place, when Jesus began to speak in parables. The speaking in parables was itself a proof of the treasure's being covered up. After the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, the kingdom could not come to that wicked generation. To the Jews and to Jerusalem the treasure is hidden: only to his disciples and the Church (and in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek) are glimpses of the coming glory given. This remark, therefore, accounts for that part of the parable being described as past.—“Which a man having found hid.” And as *the kingdom* remains to this day unmanifested, so it is with the *life* in which the kingdom is to be enjoyed. “Our *life* is *hid* with Christ in God:” Col. iii, 3.*

IX. The parable next specifies the feelings of the finder; “for *joy thereof* he goeth back.”

A slight and transient flash from the glory of the treasure once gave joy both to the seventy and to their Lord. He had sent them forth with power against demons and diseases, “And the seventy returned again *with joy*, saying, Lord even the devils are subject unto us through thy name; and he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. . . . In *that hour* JESUS REJOICED IN SPIRIT and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that *thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes:*” Luke x, 17, 18, 21. But the joy is more especially that of the discoverer of the treasure. Hence another parable describes the time of the kingdom, as the Master's joy. “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into *the joy of thy Lord:*” Matt. xxv, 21, 23. In another place it is presented to us as the joy before him which urged him on, “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; *who for the joy that was set before him* endured the cross, despising the shame:” Heb. xii, 2. So highly

* This is the time of the mystery, and therefore of concealment I would just direct notice to a various reading of a passage in Colossians. “To the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;” Col. ii, 2, 3. This is Scholtz's reading and Griesbach's.

did he value the treasure, that he was not startled at the price of the field. In another place, Jesus having spoken of the mansions of his father's house, afterwards adds, “These things have I spoken unto you, that *my joy* might remain in you, and that *your joy* might be full:” (John xv, 2,) for the joy of the *partakers* of the treasure is the same in character with that of the first discoverer. It is also a critical circumstance, and worthy to be remembered, as stamping the interpretation given with certainty; that the time of the seventy's return is the *only instance* (that I am aware of) in which Jesus is said to have rejoiced.

X. The act that follows on the joy of the discoverer is, “He goeth back” (υπαγει.) The word in question is quite different from that applied to the pearl merchant in the next parable (απελθων.) That signifies, “He went off” But this denotes that he *was away from home and went back to his home again*. Some examples of its signifying ‘to go back,’ are the following. To the centurion who left his home to ask a cure for his servant, Jesus replied, “*Go back:* and, as thou hast believed, so be it done:” Matt. viii, 13. The same expression does he make use of to the Syrophenician woman, who left her home to beseech the cure of her demoniac daughter. “For this saying, *go back;* the devil is gone out of thy daughter:” Mark vii, 29.*

The word used by the Spirit is full of emphasis and beauty, as applied to the Lord Jesus. It notices first, that he had *left his home* when he was in the field. And yet the field, *i. e.*, *the world*, is the *natural home of man*. Hence, while the finder was indeed “*a man*,” he was *more than man*. This establishes the conclusion, I think, impregnably. It is the expression that is used almost without exception, in describing the departure of our Lord from the earth.†

* Many other examples occur, as Matt. v, 24; ix, 6; xix, 21. Mark ii, 11; vi, 38; x, 21. John iii, 8; iv, 16; vi, 21; vii, 3, &c.

† The following are instances of it:—Matt. xxvi, 24. Mark xiv, 21. John vii, 33; viii, 14, 21; xiii, 3, 33, 36; xiv, 4, 28; xxi, 5, 10, 16, 17.

Again, before his going back, two classes of actions are ascribed to him. First, his finding the treasure, and therefore his uncovering it more or less: and, secondly, his covering it up again and hiding it. He uncovered it, in fact, that Israel might believe in him, and the whole be manifested at once. He earthed it up again, when the unbelief of the Jews compelled him. And thenceforward he began to retrace his steps back again to his Father. He must now no longer sit on David's throne in Jerusalem, but on his Father's throne in heaven.

The covering up of the treasure was the signal for Christ's return. And at this point his purpose changes; it is no more his longing to display the treasure: all his further acts are directed to the *purchase of the field*. We do not read of "the church" till after the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and the secret teaching by parables, which was the avenging of that sin. The setting aside for awhile of the earthly promises, opens the door then for the entrance of the heavenly. When Israel rejected him and the kingdom of the Son of David, Jesus exhibited himself in his death as the Savior of the world. And this is the point of time at which the parable presents our Lord, as the present tenses used from this point to the end of the parable, make manifest. The treasure he has covered up—he is returning back to the Father. The unbelief of Israel which enforced the concealment of the treasure once more, enforced equally the Lord's leaving earth for heaven. The enemies of the Redeemer would make him quit the field. "This is *the heir*; come, *let us kill him*, and the inheritance shall be ours." As soon as Jesus had concealed the treasure, his return back to his Father virtually began. He himself purposed it, and his enemies, in the wickedness of their plans, sought to accomplish the same end by putting him to death. Hence the first announcement of his going back to his Father, is given after the Jews seek to slay him. "Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and *sought to slay him*; because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was

his Father—making himself equal with God:" John vi, 16. "He would not walk in Judæa, because the *Jews sought to kill him*. Then, said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and *then I go back to him that sent me*:" John vii, 1, 33.

As then the parable informs us, that the man who found the treasure went back, so does it prompt the inquiry, Whence he came? And the same gospel answers us, and presents us with a view of the treasure-finder in the act of leaving the field. "When Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should *depart out of this world unto the Father*. Jesus knowing that he *was come from God and went to God*, riseth from supper:" John xiii, 1, 3. "*I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world and go to the Father*:" John xvi, 28.

XI. The final steps are, that he "selles all that he hath, and buyeth that field." Jesus possessed much, yet he surrendered all. By his righteousness as man, he was entitled to the reward of God. By his birth as son of Abraham, he had a right to the land of Canaan. By his birth as son of David, the throne of his father David was open to him.

But all that he might claim for himself, he gave up for others: his eye is bent on purchasing the world. His is the treasure by right of discovery: he will have it more securely still, by buying the field in which it lies. So the Lord Jesus has redeemed the world to himself, that when the time comes he may assert his claim, not to Judæa alone and to the kingdom over Israel, but to the full dominion over the globe. "It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant, to *raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel*. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be *my salvation unto the ends of the earth*:" Isaiah xlix, 6. This text shows that the design of the Father and the Son were the same.

But what was the price that he gave as purchase money? "There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who *gave himself* a ransom

for all:" 1 Tim. ii, 5. By this self-surrender even unto death, he bought the Church. "Feed the Church of God which he *hath purchased with his own blood*:" Acts xx, 28. But not only has he so bought the Church, but the world also is become his by right, through the same purchase money. "The bread which I will give is my flesh; which *I will give for the life of the world*:" John iv, 51. "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the *Savior of the world*:" 1 John iv, 14. "Ask of me and I will give thee the Gentiles for thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession:" Psalm ii, 8.

Therefore an apostle affirms even of the heretical teachers of the last days, "They privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even *denying the Lord that bought them*:" 2 Peter ii, 2.

"He buys *that field*." This sentence may present to our understandings the thought of the smallness of the earth itself as a part of the domain of God. He is but a small proprietor who has but a single field. But God is Lord of thousands of worlds; the fields of his dominions are (as far as we can see) without limit. Yet a peculiar value and worth attaches itself to the earth, as bought especially for his own by the Son of God. "He buyeth *that field*." Small though it be, and incapable of being seen from the distant stars, yet is "that field" of vast moment in the history of the universe: for here the Son of God himself will reign, when that word shall be fulfilled at the seventh trumpet's blast, "The *Kingdom* of the world hath become our Lord's and his Messiah's, and he shall reign for ever and ever*:" Rev. xi, 15.

Here the scene closes and Jesus departs—Lord, not only of the treasure, but of the world; and in token of the mighty action here set forth, a comparatively small transaction took place at Jerusalem typifying it. The blood of Jesus actually bought *a field*. The same

* Instead of *αι βασιλειαί*, the best MSS. and versions with several critics' approbation, read *η βασιλεια*.

Evangelist who alone records this parable, alone records the chief priests' purchase. "And he (Judas) cast down the thirty pieces of silver in the temple and departed and went and hanged himself: and the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel and BOUGHT WITH THEM THE POTTER'S FIELD to bury strangers in, wherefore that field was called 'THE FIELD OF BLOOD' unto this day:" Matt. xxvii, 5—8.

XII. Having now concluded the *interpretation* of the parable, let us consider the *mystery* here indicated.

The original mystery was, God's concealed design to make earth the seat of his universal government. But the Psalms and other places of Scripture, had set forth, more or less, this secret of God.

1. The mystery of the kingdom begins properly with the second hiding of the treasure. The finding of the treasure and the person of the discoverer had been revealed to the Jewish prophets. Is not a greater than the literal Cyrus foretold in this passage?—"Thus saith the Lord to his anointed ('his Messiah' Heb.) to Cyrus whose right hand have I holden I will *give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places*:" Isaiah xlv, 1, 3. The Jewish prophets describe the glory of the land of Judea and of the daughter of Zion, when the Lord's long concealed treasure should be displayed; and many eyes were waiting with anxiety for the coming of the Messiah to bring it to light. But the mystery begins with the covering up again of the glory of the kingdom from the eye of Israel, after Messiah had come. Even John spoke of the kingdom as at once about to appear; declared the axe to be already laid at the root of the trees, and that execution was ready to be done on every tree that bore not good fruit. He represented Messiah as standing with his winnowing shovel already in hand, ready to purge and sever asunder the wheat and chaff, and to consign the one to the barn and the other to the fire. Yet no such acts of judgment took place. He himself lingered in prison under the power

of a despotic monarch, and at length, wondering why Messiah struck not the predicted blow of justice, sent to inquire, whether he were indeed the Christ so long foretold? The Jews long expecting the kingdom to appear, at length grew impatient; and in various ways testified their disapprobation. No kingdom appeared. *We* can tell the reason. Israel's impenitence and unbelief compelled the Father and Son to earth up again the discovered treasure, till a distant time—till the nation, recovered to faith, shall say, "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The kingdom *proclaimed* and *yet put off*, answering to the treasure *found yet again hid*, is the great mystery of the parable.

This portion of God's counsels was almost entirely kept secret from Israel's prophets: assuredly it was a secret to those that perused them, equally secret with the unbelief of Israel which was the cause of it; though this last is more openly intimated by the prophets.

The want of perceiving this, emboldens even many Christians to deny that there is any treasure in the field. It is hid, and therefore they deny its existence. They suppose that the Son of Man's object in his return to earth is, to *set the field on fire, not to dig up the treasure long concealed therein*. But this parable once understood, would set them right. Christ's kingdom is *already come, in one sense*, because he is lord both of the field and of the treasure. It is *not come in another*, because the treasure is still hid. The kingdom is now in mystery, as it will be hereafter in manifestation; and the treasure dug up and brought to light will answer to the treasure now hid. Now is the time of *preaching the hid treasure*, not of *enjoying it*; of *believing*, not of *seeing* it. It is the time of proclaiming the glory of the finder, and the grace of his disinterested purchase of the field. Now is the time of hope, of carrying abroad every where the report of the glory of the hidden treasure, that when its time of display and partition comes, they who have believed therein may have a part of it. The kingdom in mystery gives room for the preaching of glory to come, or as

the Savior calls it, "*The word of the kingdom.*" But the treasure manifested will put a period to this: for then it will be no more in word, but in deed and in power. This preaching of the treasure is the *Gentile* aspect of the parable. To the Jew, the parable presents the treasure covered up: the kingdom once close at hand, now for an indefinite time deferred. But the unbelief of the Jew and the deferring of the kingdom is mercy to the Gentile. "*Through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles.*" "Ye in times past believed not God, but now *have obtained mercy through their unbelief*:" Rom xi, 11, 30.

2. A second portion of the mystery is the *departure of the treasure finder*. Had he staid in the field, we might every moment have been looking for the bringing to light of the treasure. But that, after he has found the treasure, and knows the field in which it is, and the spot where it lies, he should still leave the field entirely and for so long a time—this adds to the mystery. And thus it is with the departure of the Lord Jesus. After his leaving the field he becomes no longer an object of sight, but of faith; and his long delay gives occasion to many injurious thoughts and evil speeches against him. There have been those who have boasted of treasures found, but when such men remained poor and never brought to light the riches they affirm themselves to have acquired, men took it for granted that they were impostors. Similar will be the thoughts entertained in the latter day: many will revile the Lord Jesus as a vain boaster of treasures found. But though his long absence from the treasure is a mystery, yet his saints will still believe and look for his return.

In order to lighten the weight of difficulty, the Savior goes on to explain the reason of the abandonment of the treasure. The discoverer goes away indeed, but it is with the wise intent of securing it as his own by a new claim, as purchaser of the field in which it is found; and though away from it, he is still acting wisely in order to its full manifestation at last. He

went away to make the purchase of the field, to buy it of its owner, and to carry the price with him.

3. The third step in the mystery is the *impoverishing of the finder*. We expect that one who has come upon a treasure unexpectedly will grow suddenly rich, rising at once even from the lowest depths of poverty to the possession of wealth and affluence. But the scene in the parable is quite the reverse. The finder grows poor. He had possessions of some value before, but now he strips himself of every thing, and after the finding of the secret wealth is poorer than before! This completes the mystery. But it falls in with the view above given. The *glorification of Jesus is the treasure opened*; for the treasure is "*the riches of the Christ*," or the Messiah so long promised to the Jews: Eph. iii, 8. Hence a partial glimpse, a hurried flash, indicating the greatness of the treasure and its glory, was given when Jesus was transfigured before his disciples. Then was he seen "*coming in his kingdom*," "with power:" Matt. xvi, 28. But this was but a momentary light from the glory, and presented before the eyes of but three disciples; while even they who had seen the treasure, were warned (as those who had been entrusted with a great secret) not to tell. "Jesus charged them, saying, *Tell the vision to no man*, till the Son of Man be risen again from the dead:" Matt. xvii, 9. The *exaltation* of the Messiah and the coming of the *Kingdom of God*, are so inseparably united that, as we see here, the one brings with it the other; therefore the *humiliation* of Messiah is the *mystery of the kingdom*, as his *exaltation* is the *kingdom manifested*; and thus the events of his passion, which presented the true king treated with scorn and ignominy, and rejected even by his own nation, proved that the kingdom of God was indeed far off, and poured doubts into the minds of his expectant disciples. The enriching and the glory of the Messiah they could comprehend, but his humiliation was the mystery for which they were not prepared. Hence we read, that as soon as Jesus, on coming down from the Mount of Transfiguration,

"said unto his disciples, let these things sink down into your ears; for the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of men," "they understood not that saying, and *it was hid from them, that they perceived it not*:" Luke ix, 43, 45. And, again, "Then he took the twelve, and said unto them, behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on. And they shall scourge him and put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and *this saying was hid from them*:" Luke xviii, 31, 34. His death, as the ransom price of the world, was something concerning which the prophets were silent, and the disciples unprepared.

At that point of mystery the parable breaks off.

This is the present state of things as offered to faith. Nothing of the treasure is now to be seen—it lies concealed. The finder is gone—has left the field. Every shrub, and herb, and bush in the field remains unmoved. No foot-marks, no newly-moved earth, betoken where the treasure lies. But the finder has left in the field some of his friends to spread the tidings of his discovery, and to urge men to wait for his approach, when all that have believed the announcement shall partake of the manifested spoil. Those who believe in this report must wait with patience the finder's return. For as there are three degrees of mystery under which the treasure at present lies, so are there three answering steps of the finder, which will put an end to the mystery. To his *hiding* the treasure, will be opposed the digging up and *display* of it. To his *departure from the field*, which is the second step of mystery, will answer *his return to the field*, which will bring on the manifestation of the treasure. And to his *humiliation* and *impoverishment*, which completes the mystery, will answer *his return in glory and authority*, which will be the final scattering and dissipation of the mystery. But on these points

the parable is fitly silent. It was to present only the time of mystery, not of manifestation.

Moreover, lest any should think that Jesus' presence on high has caused him to forget this lower earth and its concerns, his own words may assure us that it is not so, but that he is only awaiting the Father's signal to begin his return to earth. For is not his treasure here? —here in his own purchased field? Then it is written, "*I have purchased a field,** and I MUST NEEDS GO AND SEE IT:" Luke xiv, 11. And again, "WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE WILL YOUR HEART BE ALSO:" Matt. vi, 21.

* *Αγορ.*

THE END.

PARABLE

OF THE

PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

EXPLAINED.

THE

PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.

“Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great value* went away† and sold all that he had, and bought it.”
MATT. xiii, 45, 46.

Before considering what is the real interpretation of the parable, let us first notice the ordinary explanations; that having marked wherein they fail, the true may be more clearly seen to hold good.

i. The first is the explanation most commonly adopted. It considers the Lord Jesus Christ as the pearl, and the true Christian as the merchantman. But what signification is to be given to the pearl in the former part of the parable, if Jesus be the pearl in the latter? Jesus stands alone, a something which has neither equal nor parallel. How then can the Christian be described as one searching for goodly *pearls*? Will you say that the pearl means a Savior? Passing by the unfitness of that which is without life to signify a *Savior*, can the true Christian be said to be seeking “goodly *Saviors*?” Or, if it should be said that the merchantman is a Jew, and Jesus the pearl, still the same difficulty applies. Was the wise Jew, or indeed *any* Jew, seeking for many Messiahs? Did he not believe that there was and could be only one true and worthy Messiah? Lastly, is it necessary, as the parable supposes, to give up all on finding Christ? It is commonly said, that we are *to be ready* to give up all for Christ. Very true—but the parable describes it as *actually done*, and *done first and in order to acquire*

* Πολυτιμον.

† Απελθων.

the pearl. On these grounds, therefore, this cannot be the true interpretation.

ii. The second interpretation comes nearest to fulfilling the statement of the Savior. This supposes that by the pearl is meant the Church, and Jesus by the merchantman. But against this I object—

1st. Whatever the pearl be in the latter part of the parable, the same must it be in the former. If by the pearl we are to understand a church, by the “goodly pearls” sought we must understand churches also. But how does this accord with the design of our Lord? Was he seeking many goodly *churches*? The parable supposes, that deserting all others that he had seen, he is attracted and fixed by one: how can this find a counterpart in the great transaction of our Redeemer? Or granting that there might be many churches, how can they be *opposed*, (as they are here,) to the *one* Church? Is not the one church composed of the many churches? Besides is it not justly said, that the church is a body of a peculiar kind, that never had or can have, its fellow? If so, then, while it might be a pearl, there could be no *other pearls*.

2nd. It is Christ’s purchase which *gives worth to the Church*: but the pearl is of great value *before it is bought*. The Church has many flaws and spots which need removal ere it can be presented glorious to the purchaser: not so with this. The pearl’s perfect beauty at once enchants the buyer. The Church is yet under the bondage of corruption till the resurrection.

iii. The third opinion supposes that by pearls are meant good of any kind, and that by the one pearl is meant the eternal and spiritual good of Christianity: and that by the merchantman is meant any man pursuing temporal good according to the ordinary and necessary bias of his nature. But against this lie the fatal objections, that on this supposition the parable is no mystery: that its aspect is then universal and not Jewish: and lastly, that in order to obtain the eternal and spiritual good of Christianity it is not necessary, or commanded, to part with all that we have.

At this period the two following general remarks may

be made, as furnishing tests of the true interpretation of the parable.—First, that whatever meaning the pearl has in the latter part of the parable, the same it must of necessity obtain in the first part. And secondly, as the consequence of this, that by the pearl cannot be meant something which stands by itself and has no fellow of its kind. It must needs be something of which there are many examples, differing from each other in value from a low degree up to the highest. And it appears to be intimated by the adjective joined to it, “*goodly pearls*,” that in the kind to which it belongs, there are examples of deformity, no less than of beauty; of worthlessness, no less than of value.

I. The elements of the true interpretation, I believe to be, that the Jew is the merchantman, that by pearls are intended acts of righteousness or good works, and by the one great pearl is meant the righteousness of the Lord Jesus.

A merchantman is one who seeks by barter or exchange to obtain his living, and to make himself rich at last. He must, therefore, have understanding or intelligence concerning the goods in which he deals, and be a *judge* of their value. This was the character and position of the Jew and of the Jew alone. He only knew what righteousness in the sight of God was, he only was a *judge* of it. “Hearken unto me ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law:” Isaiah li, 7. The Gentiles were babes besides him, almost totally ignorant of God’s will. And thus an apostle describes the Jew. He is addressed at the beginning of the 2nd of Romans as the man that judged—ver. 1—3. And afterwards he is thus accosted by name, “Behold thou art called a Jew, and believest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and *knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent*, being instructed out of the law, and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them that sit in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law:” Rom. ii, 17—20. The Israelite then, instructed of God, knew

what righteousness was; and was not, as the Gentile—a babe—ready to mistake a bead for a pearl.

Moreover the law itself gave him his merchant character. The law said to him in effect.—‘Go, get rich in good works, that thou mayest win eternal life.’ “Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth these things shall *live by them* :” Rom. x, 5. As then the merchant is to live by his wares, so was the Jew to *live by his righteous acts*. The law itself commanded him to seek righteousness, in order to obtain the advantages resulting from it. “*Righteousness, righteousness* shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live and inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee* :” Deut. xvi, 20. As then the merchantman is here represented seeking pearls, so was the Jew commanded to *seek righteousness*. “*Seek righteousness, seek meekness* :” Zeph. ii, 3. By his obedience before God he was to obtain and earn every blessing. Righteousness was the commodity he was to furnish; life, prosperity and happiness was to be value received from the Most High in return. The principle of strict barter, and exact equivalent was one of the law’s ruling principles. “Hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked to bring his way upon his head, and *justify the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness* :” 1 Kings viii, 32. The kingdom promised to the Jew was a kingdom of righteousness. “Behold a king shall *reign in righteousness*, and princes shall rule in judgment :” Isaiah xxxii, 2. Also, Psalm lxxii, 1, 2, and Isaiah xi, 1, 4, 5. The merchant, then, cannot be a Gentile. The characteristic search of the Gentile, was not righteousness but *knowledge*. “The Greeks (or Gentiles) *seek after wisdom* :” 1 Cor. i, 22.

It is worthy of note also as confirming the above view, that the participle used is the present participle “*seeking* goodly pearls,” for that was the attitude of the conscientious Jew up to the time that Jesus was

speaking, and beyond it. For not till after the resurrection of our Lord Jesus was his righteousness set forth as the end of the law. Also the verbs which follow are not in the present, but in the past. This was necessitated by the nature of the parable. The Savior could not in consistency have said, “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant, seeking beautiful pearls, who when *he shall have found* one pearl of great value, *will go*,” &c. But the Lord Jesus evidently supposes that the rest of the parable is future: for if the seeking were continued up to that day, the finding, and much more the selling all must take place after it. And herein it stands contrasted with the preceding parable of the treasure: for there the part fulfilled is described as past:—“Having found the treasure he *hid* it,” and thenceforward the verbs run on the present tense, as marking what was then actually transacting, and receiving its immediate accomplishment.

Now righteousness is compared to a jewel or ornament in the prophet Isaiah. “He hath clothed me with the garment of salvation, he hath covered me with the *robe of righteousness*, as a bridegroom *decketh himself with ornaments*, and as a bride adorneth herself with her *jewels* :” Isaiah lxi, 10.

In exact correspondence, also, with the expressions of the parable, which speak both of the one pearl in the singular number, and of “goodly pearls” in the plural—righteousness, though it is generally spoken of in the singular is yet used in the plural, both in Hebrew and in Greek, and as referring both to God and man. “There shall they rehearse the *righteousnesses* of the Lord ;” Judges v, 11, (*margin*.) “Stand still, that I may reason with you before the Lord of all the *righteousnesses* of the Lord :” 1 Sam. xii, 7, (*margin*.) The same expression is used concerning man. “All our *righteousnesses* are as filthy rags :” Isaiah lxiv, 6. “If he trust to *his own righteousness* and commit iniquity, all his *righteousnesses* shall not be remembered :” Ezek. xxxiii, 13, where the word occurs in both forms. As also Dan.

* צדק, צדק. In the margin—“Justice, justice.”

ix, 19. The same obtains also in the New Testament. "If the uncircumcision keep the *righteousnesses* of the law:" Rom. ii, 26. (δικαιώματα.) "The fine linen is the *righteousnesses* of the saints:" Rev. xix, 8. Moreover "beautiful" or "goodly" (καλός) is the word continually used concerning works." "That they may see your *good* works:" Matt. v, 16. (καλά.) So Titus ii, 7, 14; iii, 8, 14, &c. Moreover, according to the test proposed above, to the class of moral *actions sins* belong, no less than righteousness.

Israel was thus a seeker of pearls: Isaiah lviii, 1, 2. But they *sought* only, they did not *find*; or what they found was rejected by the Most High as valueless: as it is written—"I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works, for they shall not profit thee:" Isaiah lvii, 12. "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our *righteousnesses* are as filthy rags:" Isaiah lxiv, 6. Similar was God's judgment concerning Israel's good works in the Savior's day. The Pharisees were pearl merchants, confident of the value of their wares, but he who knew how to discern the true from the false, pointed out the one flaw which ran through them all and made them worthless. "All their works they do for to be seen of men:" Matt. xxiii, 5. The flawed pearls though they passed as goodly and beautiful with men, were detected at once by him that read the heart. He warns his disciples, therefore, that there would be *no entrance into his kingdom* except they could offer a righteousness better than that of the Scribe and Pharisee. "I say unto you, that except *your righteousness* shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case *enter into the kingdom of heaven*:" Matt. v, 20. In this passage we get the relation in which the *pearl* stands to the *kingdom*. The kingdom is the kingdom of the righteous, open to none but these, and, therefore, the *manner of obtaining righteousness* may well be a secret or mystery of the kingdom. The Lord in this place leaves the question in mystery, affirming only, in his sermon on the Mount, that the righteousness required must be better than that of the Pharisees, but giving no clue to guide to

the knowledge of what the righteousness was, or how to be procured. The law left the Jew a sinner, while it supposed him to have the knowledge of righteousness. He was a *judge* of pearls and a *seeker* for them, but he *had* them not, or not such as God would accept and acknowledge. "There is none righteous, no not one:" Rom. iii, 10. The knowledge of a commodity and judgment concerning it, are often disjoined from the *possession* of it. Righteousness might not come by the law, else the gospel were needless and Christ died in vain: Gal. ii, 21. But what the law could not do, the gospel does. The law sought righteousness among men, and especially among Israel; but found it not. The law was *righteousness required*, the Gospel is *righteousness revealed*. This, Paul describes as its glory—"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. for therein is the *righteousness of God revealed*:" Rom. i, 16, 17. The gospel is righteousness ministered, as the law was the ministration of condemnation. "If the *ministration of condemnation* be glory, much more doth the *ministration of righteousness* exceed in glory:" 2 Cor. iv, 9. And hence its doctrine is called the "word of righteousness:" Heb. v, 13. And faith does not search for it high and low, for to it it is nigh. "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven (that is to bring Christ down from above) or who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring Christ up again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart:" Rom. x, 6—8. The law is righteousness *sought*, the gospel is righteousness *found*. The preaching of the gospel is the praise and recommendation of the pearl. This was its especial aspect to the Jews: and thus does Paul set it forth to the Jew. "By him, (Jesus) all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses:" Acts xiii, 39. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without law is manifested, being witnessed by the

law and prophets: even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe:" Rom. iii, 20—22.

The present parable gives us the meeting of the Law and the Gospel, or their adaptation one to the other, the one as creating, the other as supplying the wants of the Jew. The Law set the Israelite upon searching, the Gospel offers that of which he is in search. The Law required righteousness, and if his eyes were opened by its strict requirements, he must behold flaws not only in all that himself did, but in the best acts of the recorded servants and prophets of God. The Law is the seeking of pearls, the Gospel is the one pearl of the righteousness of Christ found.

The parable before us is therefore of great importance as connecting the disclosures of the epistles with the Savior's teaching in the Gospels. The doctrine of justification by faith rests almost entirely upon the arguments and statements of the Gentile Apostle Paul, while the argument and statement of St. James have been thought by many, to be contradictory to his. And therefore, some have sought to do away with the authority of Paul, with the cry—"Not Paul, but Jesus." But the parable of the pearl rightly interpreted, does, I believe, supply the seeming omission, and shows that Paul's doctrine is only an expansion and revelation of the doctrine which Jesus covertly taught long before. If so, then it is evident at once, that this parable is brought into immediate contact with the epistle to the Romans. Perhaps, therefore, it may not be a thing unwelcome, to translate (so to speak) some of the doctrinal statements of the epistle into the language of the parable.

The Law shewed the flaws and specks of all the pearls but one: as it is written, "By the Law is the knowledge of sin:" iii, 20. The faults of the pearls of man, however, served but as foils to set off the glory of God's, for "*Our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God:*" iii, 5. As then the Gospel presents us with a perfect righteousness, Paul asks, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid;

yea, we establish the law." The finding of the pearl and its purchase, is not contradictory to the design of the merchant, but its completion. As the pearl is righteousness, so is *obedience* the gentle and noiseless process of its formation. "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of *obedience unto righteousness?*" vi, 16. The very shape of the pearl is glanced at in the following verse: for such as the Law was, such must be the form of the obedience rendered, "Ye have obeyed from the heart the *form of doctrine* whereto ye were delivered:" vi, 17. (margin.) And as the pearl springs from the juices of the whole body of the shell-fish—so analogically, we read—"Yield ye your members as *instruments of righteousness* unto God:" vi, 13. And as the apostle notes the unfruitfulness of disobedience, as it is written—"What *fruit* had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" (vi, 21,) so is the pearl the fruit of perfect obedience—"Ye have your *fruit* unto holiness and the end everlasting life:" vi, 22.

Lastly, we may remark that Jesus and his apostle in one respect seem to oppose each other, at least on the interpretation here given. For the Lord Jesus supposes the Jew to find and to buy the pearl. But Paul in sorrow says of his own countrymen, that "*Israel which followed after the law of righteousness* (here is his merchant character set forth) *hath not attained to the law of righteousness:*" ix, 30. Nay, he goes on yet further to say—"They being *ignorant of God's righteousness* and seeking (*ζητοῦντες*) to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God:" x, 3. But this difficulty is easily reconciled. Jesus foresaw that the multitude would not hear and understand, and the parable was addressed only to *his disciples*. It describes the actions of a *real child of the kingdom*; while the Savior foretold that the nominal children would be cast out. And thus St. Paul's statement exactly agrees herewith. "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he

seeketh for (the merchant's attitude again) but the ELECTION HATH OBTAINED IT and the rest were blinded:" ix, 7.

II. We may now consider the peculiar propriety of comparing the righteousness of the Lord Jesus to a pearl. Why was it not compared to a *diamond*, which is even more valuable than a pearl? Because the diamond is a thing of unknown origin, coming from the earth, and the righteousness of Jesus is a thing traceable to a known source, originating in holy love, and perfected by heavenly obedience. But especially because the diamond *owes its beauty, form, and lustre, to the art of man*, to the violence of cutting and grinding. But before God what is hewn and fashioned with tool of iron is polluted. "And if thou make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it thou hast polluted it:" Exodus xx, 25. And this would not—could not set forth gentle grace of him whose righteousness needs no the polish, and can receive none from man. But the pearl as soon as it is brought forth from its shell is complete in beauty and lustre, and needs not the skill of man to confer on it value.

2. The pearl is the produce of an oyster—a common worthless looking shell-fish; and of oysters there are two kinds, those that bear pearls and those that yield none. So the world was divided into Gentiles and Jews: those instructed in the righteousness of God, and those ignorant of it; those who in some instances wrought righteousness, and those who wrought only evil. The Jew as distinguished from the Gentile, was the pearl-bearing oyster. And this distinction St. Paul makes where he is engaged on the question of the righteousness of God, entitling the one "*Jews by nature*," and the other "*sinners of the Gentiles*."

3. Some shell-fish are remarkable for beauty of shape or color, but the oyster has an unpromising exterior, and that which contains the goodliest pearl differs in nothing externally from the oyster that contains none. So it was with the Lord Jesus. Of him it is said,

"He hath no *form nor comeliness*; and when *we shall see him there is no beauty, that we should desire him*:" Isaiah liii, 2.

4. The pearl is an *animal* production, the most valuable of the animal kingdom. It is accounted by Pliny the most precious of all things. But the point especially to be noticed is, that it is produced from the juices of the fish by a natural process of formation within its shell. So the righteousness of Jesus was the production of a man—the result of his perfect obedience during the days of his humiliation, and proceeding from the constant exercise and energy of his most holy dispositions.

5. The pearl-oyster lives upon the sea-sand near the shore, in some feet depth of water. Now by the sea-sand is represented Israel, and by the sea the Gentiles; thus Jesus was born and lived while Israel was under Gentile domination. The truth of this interpretation will be more fully seen when the next parable is explained.

6. Pearls are obtained by divers, in the employ of masters on shore; they go forth in boats and sink themselves to the bottom by a weight attached to their foot, and hastily gather up the oysters into a net tied by a rope about their throats. Thus Jesus was sought by Judas, acting not for himself but for the Chief Priests and Pharisees. The weight that sunk him was thirty pieces of silver, and like the pearl-diver, he went to his employment with a rope about his neck. "He cast down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed and went and *hanged himself*." In the net which he spread for another, were his own feet taken.

7. The oyster when caught is conveyed to land, and left to die by a lingering death in a pit dug for the purpose with sand heaped over it. Thus Jesus was left to die by a lingering death and was buried.

It is thought that the pangs of the animal's death help to produce the beauty of the pearl. It is certain that the death of Jesus gave the finishing lustre to his perfect righteousness.

8. After death the oyster is taken up out of the pit,

the shell readily opens, and the pearl is disclosed, and removed without difficulty. Herein it differs from other valuable animal productions, which need to be cut or torn from the animal after death, as ivory, musk, &c. Even thus the resurrection proved and displayed the perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus: and from that day forth it was to be exhibited in all its beauty to the believer for his acceptance and trust.

9. The pearl is the *result of the life* of the shell-fish; and accordingly the righteousness of the Lord Jesus is the *product of his most holy life*. The life of the oyster is but short, the duration of the pearl many times longer than the life of the fish. The flesh of the fish corrupts. The pearl is incorruptible. The life of the Lord Jesus was but three and thirty years; but his "righteousness is *for ever*." The pearl is no part of the animal, though produced by it. Its perfection is seen only *in its separateness from it*.

10. The pearl profits not the animal itself. It dies to advantage another. Thus the righteousness of the Lord Jesus was not intended for himself but for us. "He was delivered for *our offences* and rose again for *our justification*:" Rom. iv, 25.

11. The pearl lies concealed in the shell till after the animal's death. To attempt to open it before that period were dangerous, and likely to injure the pearl, as during life the fish closes the shell with much force. —Thus Jesus could not be taken before "his hour was come," for not till then was the work fulfilled which the Father had given him to finish.

12. The pearl, though it comes from so mean a source is a rare thing, and though obscure in its origin, is kingly in its use; the fittest ornament of an imperial crown. The righteousness of the Lord Jesus is the only one amongst men that can be accounted perfect, and it is in consequence of its perfection, that the Father has anointed Jesus king above his fellows: and given him a name above every name.

13. The color of the best pearls is white; and white is the color of *righteousness* and *purity*. Therefore of the justified it is said, that "though their sins be as

scarlet, they shall be *white as snow*: Isaiah i, 18. To the righteous it is promised that they shall "walk in *white raiment*," and the throne of supreme justice which is reared at last is "a great *white throne*." The pretenders to righteousness on the other hand are described as possessing only an *outward whiteness not natural to them and not running through them, but added as a coating from without*. The Pharisees, therefore, were like unto "*whited sepulchres*," and Paul reproved his unjust judge with "God shall smite thee, thou *whited wall*."

14. This account of the meaning of the pearl agrees with what we read of it in scripture. From Matt. vii, 6, we learn that it is something *holy*, as it is written, "Give not that *which is holy* unto dogs, neither cast ye your *pearls* before swine."

15. Again we read of the city of God—"The twelve gates were twelve *pearls*: every several gate was of one pearl: Rev. xxi, 21. But this city is "the *holy Jerusalem*:" ver. 10. We are taught, therefore, that the entrance to the *city of holiness* is through the *gates of righteousness*. And thus it is written in the Psalms, "Open me the *GATES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS*:" Psalm cxviii, 19.

16. Again, how quietly and noiselessly the pearl is formed! There is no outward indication of the valuable process going on *within*. Even thus righteousness is a thing not of the exterior, but of the *inner man*. The want of a just perception of this, the Savior rebuked as folly in the Pharisees. "Now do ye Pharisees make clean the *outside* of the cup and platter, but your *inward part* is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not he that made *that which is without*, make *that which is within* also?" Luke xi, 39, 40. And noiseless as the pearl's formation was the obedience of the Lord Jesus. For thirty years he patiently continued in well-doing unnoticed, and unknown, as the carpenter's son. Even thus was he beheld by the prophet in his gentle career of duteous love—"He shall not strive nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets."

17. We may observe again, that those animals whose productions or whose bodies are valuable to man generally have some means of defence. But the oyster has none.—It perishes passively. Where it is thrown it lies till it dies. And in this point of view it was fit to typify him “who was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb dumb before his shearer, opened not his mouth.”

III. Of the merchantman it is said that he “*found* one pearl of great price.” To him who seeks it is promised that he shall find: and there is an especial promise to him that seeks righteousness. “He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness and honor:” Prov. xxi, 21. The prophets testified of this righteousness as nigh at hand in their day. “*I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off; and my salvation shall not tarry:*” Isaiah xlvi, 13. “Keep ye judgment and do justice, for my salvation is near to come, and *my righteousness to be revealed:*” Isaiah lvi, 1.

But now the pearl is not only near, but shown; not only sought, but found. The expression “found” bespeaks its rarity. Righteousness of works was not found even in Abraham, as saith the Apostle—“What shall we say then, that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh *hath found?* For if Abraham were justified *by works* he hath whereof to glory, but not before God:” Romans iv, 1, 2. And hence the search in heaven and earth, and under the earth, for a man worthy in the eye of God, was vain. “I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book?... And no one in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much because *no one was found worthy* to open and to read the book:” Rev. v, 2—4.

IV. It is noticed that he “found *one* pearl.” There is great emphasis and depth of meaning in the word “*one*.” Not unfrequently several pearls are found in the same shell, but they are generally small. And thus it is with the worthies and holy men of Scripture. We can fix on certain parts of their lives, and hold them up

to admiration as points of time in which they wrought righteousness. We can point to Abraham’s leaving his country, and his faith concerning the promised seed, and the sacrifice of his son. We can bring before our eyes David’s faith in the fight with Goliath, his gentleness in sparing Saul, and his desire to build a temple to the Most High. Here are more pearls than one in the same shell.

But not thus is it with our Lord. His righteousness was but *one*: his life was but *one act* of holy obedience. It was of *one piece*, one grand whole. No act was less than perfection, both as regarded its circumstances and in itself. The righteous deeds of the saints are detached and separate acts, here and there a grace peeping forth amidst much of evil; a ray of light shooting athwart darkness. The best works of the holiest are little *seed-pearls*, good in their way, but begun at detached times, soon ended, soon broken off by unbelief and disobedience. But it is the glory of the work of Jesus that in it there is no break, no failure, no falling off. The righteousness of Christ began from his birth, grew continually and unbrokenly: every word he spake, every act he did, added to its value and increased its size. Each shining particle of the pearl fell into its rightful place. No disobedience ever marred the beauty of its water, or the perfection of its shape.

A second reason for the Savior’s emphatic use of the word “*one*” is found in this—that there is but one such pearl throughout the universe. Its fellow there cannot be. It is the “**RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD!**” As then the Scripture uses the word with emphasis where the thing spoken of is singular in its glory, so is it here, “Having yet therefore *ONE Son*, his well-beloved, he sent him also:” Mark xii, 6. “**ONE** is your master, even the Christ; and all ye are brethren.” “**ONE** is your Father which is in heaven:” Matt. xxiii, 8, 9.

The Jew was seeking for *many pearls*; for he hoped to become “rich in good works.” He looked to be justified by a number of repeated and detached acts. But the thought of God is far above that of man. The pearls of men are *many*: the pearl of God is *ONE*.

The righteousness of Christ is moreover called "*one*" in Rom. v, 18. "By *one righteousness* the free gift came upon all men to justification of life." (*margin.*) This oneness constitutes its glory and its value. It is "one pearl of great price." In things rare and valuable, the worth increases in a rapid rate in proportion to the size. In the diamond for instance, if one of a carat weight be worth £8, a diamond of ten carats is worth, not £80, but £800: and a diamond of a hundred carats is worth, not £800, but £80,000. Thus, while the righteous acts of the saints are pearls, and not without their value, the pearl of God is of infinite value, inasmuch as its size is vast, its beauty without film or flaw, its shape perfect, and its lustre without an equal. If the commanded obedience of a *day* be of value, what must be the value of the voluntary, unflawed, unbroken, righteousness of *a life*?

History presents us with instances of some pearls for which immense sums were given. Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, had one valued at £80,000: the Emperor of Persia, in modern times, possessed one for which he paid £110,400.

V. But the spiritual pearl before us is one of very "*great value*," because in it are centred those qualities which God himself accounts precious. (1.) Wisdom is precious in his sight. "Happy is the man that findeth *wisdom* She is more *precious* than rubies:" Prov. iii, 15. (2) Knowledge is precious, as it is written, "The lips of Knowledge are a *precious* jewel: Prov. xx, 15. (3) *Faith is precious*, as saith the apostle—"To them that have obtained like *precious faith*:" 2 Peter i, 1. (4) Love is precious—"Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to *dwell together in unity*. It is like the *precious ointment* upon the head: Psalm cxxxiii, 1, 2. (5) The revelation of the mind of God is precious, as it is written—"The *word of the Lord was precious* in those days; there was no open vision: 2 Sam. iii, 1. (6) Fidelity is beautiful in the sight of God—"Showing all good *fidelity*: that they may *adorn* the doctrine of God our Savior:" Titus ii, 10. (7) A *meek and quiet spirit* is

in the sight of God of great value; as saith St. Peter—"Let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a *meek and quiet spirit*, which is in the sight of God of *great price*:" 1 Peter, iii, 4. All these graces and beauties meet in the pearl of God. In the righteousness of Jesus are wisdom, faith, love, the lip of knowledge, fidelity, and a meek and quiet spirit. Its lustre was completed by his *death*. And this is most precious before God, as saith the scripture—"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the *death* of his saints:" Psalm cxvi, 15. And again, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold. But with the *precious blood* of Christ." 1 Peter, i, 18, 19. And its last excellence is, that it is the ransom price of men. "The *redemption of their soul is precious*:" Psalm xlix, 8.

In the history of this pearl we may see the opposite valuations of God and man. In God's sight, Jesus was a living stone, "chosen of God, and precious," and his righteousness a pearl of great price. But Israel, in their foolishness and unbelief, valued him but at the slave's price, even thirty pieces of silver.

VI. We return now to the merchantman who found the pearl. He did not pick it up by chance; it was in the hands of a possessor who knew its value, but was willing to part with it, only he must have his price for it; and the price was such that he must go and sell all that he had in order to obtain it.

These were trying terms; terms calculated to make a man pause. And it was the seeming hardship of the requirement, that made the Jews refuse to purchase. The Jew fancied himself rich in good works; the owner of many pearls. He could not consent, therefore, to give up these and all he had. But the righteousness of God is such, that we cannot retain at once both that and our own. If we keep *our own* righteousness, we must resign *his*: if we would have *his* righteousness, we must surrender *our own*. But the merchant, as a child of the kingdom, values the pearl at the valuation which God sets upon it, and he is content to come to

his terms, surrendering all that he might have thought himself possessed of through obedience to the law, in order to obtain it. But of his countrymen in general, Paul writes, that they sought righteousness indeed, but obtained it not, because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. They thought highly of their own pearls, and proportionably despised the one pearl of God.

This the Lord shewed in a figure in the example of the rich young man, to whom he gave the command that he should sell all that he had and come and follow him. He went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. But then, on the other hand, we have the direct example given us of one merchantman who so valued the pearl of God, that he went and sold all that he had in order to purchase it. He once imagined himself rich; but when he saw the standard of God's judgment concerning works, and the glory of the righteousness of Christ, he surrendered all with joy. "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh, If any man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church: touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. (But now comes his exchange and purchase.) But *what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ, Yea doubtless and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him; not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:*" Phil. iii, 4—9, And the eleventh verse shews the connexion of the *righteousness* of God with the *kingdom* of God, for he adds, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from the dead." (ἐξανάστασιν τῶν νεκρῶν.) Now the resurrection from amongst the dead, is "the resurrection of the just,"

and all the risen righteous have part in the kingdom of God and of Christ during the thousand years. It is important to observe this connexion between the righteousness of God and the kingdom of God, the one being the necessary requirement in order to the other. And the full perception of this will establish, I believe, in the reader's mind, the persuasion that this is the true interpretation of the parable. Therefore also in another place we find them openly united—"Seek ye first THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS; and all these things shall be added unto you:" Matthew vi, 32.

VII. Such a purchase as the merchantman here makes, is one of faith. None would put himself to such inconvenience, loss, and self-denial, as to sell all he had, except he were deeply enamored of the pearl and fully satisfied of its immense value, and of the certainty that it would one day enrich its possessor. This is the prospect of the Christian. Hence with faith are joined love and assurance of hope. And thus it is said of the justified believer, "we through the Spirit wait for the *hope of righteousness* by faith:" Gal. v, 5. That is, as I judge, the hope of the righteous is the glory to be revealed, and we through the Spirit, in faith wait for it. The selling of all that he had, is the merchant's faith shewn by his works; and by works is his faith made perfect.

The consequence of the buying of the pearl is that the merchant ceases from his former search for pearls. When he has bought this one he is satisfied, and looks for no more. He ceases from his work, as God did from his work of creation when it was complete, on the seventh day. Such is declared to be the position of faith now. "He that is entered into his rest he also *hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his:*" Heb. iv, 10. Nor has he any thing wherewith to purchase more pearls. He is a *beggar*, except that he has the pearl. He has nothing to *boast of*, except of the pearl that he has found. This also is the place of one justified by faith. "Where is *boasting*, then? It is excluded. By what law—of works? Nay, but

by the law of faith :” Rom. iii, 27. He is put to much present inconvenience, but he is satisfied, for the end of his search is attained : for “ *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth :*” Rom. x, 4.

VIII. And now a word or two in conclusion concerning the mystery of the parable, The great foundation of it is, the question which was asked as long ago as the days of Job—“ How shall man be just (or righteous) with God ?” The law provided no way but that of perfect obedience to every jot and tittle of its commands. But it found none such. Yet the kingdom of glory must be the kingdom of the *saints* (as Daniel saw) and therefore of the justified. The Savior, then, in a parable unfolded the mystery of the believer’s righteousness through faith in him. The righteousness of the Lord Jesus imputed to him and made over to him is his title to the kingdom. But this was not openly taught by the Redeemer. It was a mystery—a secret which the Spirit who was to come should fully shew. The pearl during Christ’s life was *hid in the shell*. After his death and resurrection it was to be the riches and glory of the believer. But it is worthy of observation, that though the parable has an evident application to Christians in general, since all who are righteous must be so through the imputed merits of Christ Jesus, yet the terms of the parable are not *satisfied* by explaining it of *Christians generally*. No Gentile can be the merchantman ; for none now could be accounted in God’s sight as possessed of any judgment, who should be *seeking by acts of righteousness to enter the kingdom*. Nor did God recognize any acts of the Gentile as pleasing in his sight, or to be accounted righteousness before him. The Jew was wise in seeking to do good works as acceptable to God up till the time when Jesus came, and the gospel was preached. But for any one now to be treading that ground, is to prove himself, not the wise merchant, but the foolish builder, rejecting the only corner-stone appointed by God.

Even now the teaching of the parable is a mystery to

many. Faith strips itself of all its good works to purchase the pearl, and with it is content. Unbelief is satisfied with its own pearls, and will not accept or does not acknowledge God’s pearl, and his terms of purchase. That we are to become rich by confessing our poverty and abandoning all, is still a difficulty to the natural man. That we are to be righteous in God’s sight, not by our own merits, but by the righteousness of Christ Jesus made ours by faith’s self-surrender ; this, unbelief stumbles at still, and it remains a mystery.

Another mystery of the parable is that the merchant of *the kingdom of God* should become *poor* by his traffic. The *pearl merchants of earth* grow rich by their trade, and are the great men of the world : as it is written “ *The merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.*” And again, “ *The merchandise of gold and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls. . . . The merchants of these things are made rich by her :*” Rev. xviii, 3, 12, 15. But the merchant of the kingdom of God becomes poor by his exchange, and rich only in prospect and in hope.

And at this point the parable abruptly breaks off. This is according to the wisdom of God : for it deals with mystery ; and the mystery lasts during the time while the kingdom is in mystery. During that period the merchants of earth are rich, because their wares being of the earth, fetch an instant price and find a ready sale in the kingdoms of the earth. But these same merchants are seen wailing in dust and ashes when the kingdom of God is come ; for “ *none buyeth their merchandise any more ;*” and their wealth is exchanged for poverty. But on the other hand, they who have exercised self-denial and lived in poverty during the appointed time, become rich and joyful when the kingdom appears in its glory.

The mystery is the pearl *bought*—The buying *impoverishes*. But the clearing up of the mystery is the *pearl’s value given*, and this *enriches*. The mystery lasts while Christ’s kingdom is unseen, and existing only in its principles : the opening of the mystery

occurs when the kingdom is manifested : and when its children shine like the sun. But this is not touched on, for the parable relates only to the mysteries of the kingdom. But it is promised that every sacrifice made in this age for the kingdom of God's sake shall be rewarded a hundred fold, and he that makes the sacrifice shall inherit eternal life.

In conclusion, how can this tract be better closed than by the expressive words of the prophet describing the glorious period of Christ's coming kingdom? "*The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.*" Isaiah xxxii, 17.

THE END.

THE

DRAG-NET.

Third Edition.

THE DRAG-NET.

MATT. XIII. 47—50.

“Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like unto a drag-net, which had been cast into the sea, and had gathered (some fish) of every kind; which, when it was fulfilled, they drew up upon the beach, and sat down and collected the good ones into vessels, but cast the bad (rotten) ones outside.”

“So shall it be at the end of the age. The angels shall go forth and separate the malicious from the midst of the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

THERE are two theories concerning the interpretation of the parable before us; or, more strictly, one theory, with two modifications. Both suppose it to refer to the church. We will present the first in the author's words.

I. “The *world* is a vast sea, and the children of men are things creeping innumerable, both small and great, in that sea.” “*The preaching of the gospel* is the casting of a net into this sea, to catch something out of it.” “*Ministers* are fishers of men, employed in *casting* and *drawing* this net.” “This net gathers of every kind, as large drag-nets do. In the *visible church* there is a vast deal of trash and rubbish, dirt and weeds and vermin, as well as fish. There is a time coming when this net will be full, and drawn to the shore; a set time when the gospel shall have fulfilled that for which it is sent.” “Still it fills, and will be drawn to shore when the mystery of God shall be finished.” “While the net is in the sea, it is not known what is in it; the fishermen themselves cannot distinguish; but they carefully draw it, and all that is in it, to the shore, for the sake of the good that is in it. Such is God's care for the visible church, and such should ministers' concern be for those under their charge, though they are mixed.” The angels of

heaven shall come forth to do that which the angels of the churches could never do—they shall sever the wicked from among the just.”

Hence the lesson is often drawn, by the ministers of national churches, that it was evidently thus designed by Christ, that His visible church should consist of both good and evil, and that the attempt to discriminate and separate between the two classes, before the final day of account, is not only unwise, and of necessity unsuccessful, but unlawful and unholy.

The argument, it will be perceived, turns on the question whether the parable refers to the church. This proposition is assumed, not proved. It will be shown, in the course of the tract, to be unsound.

II. The other theory supposes the sea to be “the sea of peoples,” or the Gentiles: the fishermen to signify ministers, who gather saved souls out of the world into the church, or the churches. “The fishermen are occupied about the good; they put them into vessels. As for the bad, they only reject them, and put them aside; there is the effect of the understanding of the fisherman. What is his object?—with what does he concern himself?—the good fish. To have them according to his desire and purpose, he must, in passing, reject the others, but it is only that he may have the good. Except in this respect, he has nothing to do with the bad—they are not his concern—they are only an encumbrance to him—the net was not cast for them. He gathers the good into vessels. Neither is their ultimate destination his concern; his business is to catch them, and gather them into vessels apart.”

But as the explanation which follows asserts the agency of the angels for judgment, in casting the wicked into the furnace of fire, it is added, “It is quite clear that this is a procedure *quite different* from what is related in the parable, and which goes beyond the contents of it.” The angels have not to do with the net and its mingled contents; but the fishermen of the parable deal with the righteous only, the angels only with the wicked of the world

generally. "The good which are found in the net will be separated, and put into vessels by those who have drawn the net to shore, according to their discernment of the good and bad; then the angels will take the bad in the world, and separate them from the righteous who shall be found there, and will cast the former (the bad) into the furnace of fire. *This was not the affair of the fishermen.* But the two events take place in the world, at the end of the age. The *angels* have nothing to do with the *good*, but to leave them; while the *fishermen* occupy themselves with the good, to dispose of them, in rejecting and leaving the bad."

I would first examine the idea common to both, that the parable refers to the church, and the processes now going on in it, and then consider especially the peculiarities of the last view.

I. Both suppose two sets of agents.

1. The first gives the fishermen two meanings—that of ministers of the gospel to the fishermen now, and of angels to the fishermen hereafter.

2. The other supposes the fishermen in the Parable to be ministers; but the agents in the Explanation to be angels.

II. Both suppose many instances of drawing the net and acting on its contents.

1. The first supposes that the one at the close of the age is principally intended, but slips in the idea of many haulings now.

2. The other supposes the hauls of the net to take place only now, and the agency of the angels to be quite independent of, and unconnected with, the net.

Notice, then, the structure of the portion of Christ's word now to be examined. It is two-fold; first the parable, then the explanation or epilogue. First a natural scene is set before us; then its prophetic and spiritual meaning is pointed out.

Next, against both views we may observe:—

1. That but *one class of actors* is mentioned. In the parable of the Wheat and the Tares two classes are noticed, and one class is distinguished from the other. The servants of the householder are forbidden to lay

hands on the tares; the disposal of them and of the wheat is committed to the reapers; and the reapers are declared to be angels.

2. The *time of casting the net* proves it not to be the gospel. The net "*had been cast*" when the Saviour was speaking these parables: at the same time that He speaks of himself in the Wheat and Tares as "*sowing*." "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man *sowing* (*σπειροντι*) good seed in his field." But the sea is the Gentile nations: and the gospel had not yet been carried to them.

3. The *time of moving the net* also is different. The net is supposed *inactive*, that is, immovable, till the end of the age. The fishermen do not lay hold on it till it is *full*. The gospel net is in constant activity, moving from spot to spot, and its motion will not cease till the end of the age. Moreover, ministers do not delay to gather in souls to Christ and to His church till the number of the saved, or the end of the age, is completed. The condition supposed in the parable—"when it was full"—is explained in the concluding words of the Lord, to signify, "at the end of the age."

4. Again, the act described in the parable is a *single act*, *collectively* accomplished once for all by the fishermen. The gathering in of souls to the Church of Christ is an *habitual act*, carried on *incessantly* by *many* separated ministers, each in his generally *isolated* sphere.

5. The church is a body gathered out of both Jew and Gentile: Rom. ix. 24. The righteous here are gathered out of the *Gentile* sea alone. Is not this decisive?

6. The *mode of judgment* exhibited in the parable cannot, so far as I can discover, be made to square with the manner pointed out in the Wheat and Tares. There the tares are first, after being plucked up, to be bound in bundles, and then the righteous to be gathered into the garner. In the net, the fish are dealt with equably as they come to the fishermen's hands—now a good fish is lit upon and it is put into the vessel, now a bad fish and it is flung away.

But this observation would only bear against the first theory. I proceed then to consider more closely the second.

i. The main point of failure in that, is the denial of identity between the fishermen of the parable, and the angels of the explanation. It denies, too, that the net of the parable is overhauled by the angels, so that the Saviour's concluding words of explanation are cut loose from the parable. This will be quite decisive to a spiritual mind, I am persuaded, against the reception of such an interpretation.

"So shall it be in the end of the age."

What shall take place in the end of the age answering to the scene of the parable? Not the casting of the net. That had already long before taken place. Is it the net's gathering of every kind? Be it so: that is only preparatory to the agency of the fishermen in dragging it to shore, and dealing with the contents of the net. The time of the net's immobility is not referred to in the explanation. The parallelism then begins only with the agency of the fishermen. And this, says the Lord, answers to the conduct of the angels at the end of the age. "The angels come forth." The actors who drag the net on shore at length appear. The parable supposes but one class of agents—the explanation supposes but one also. They both sever between the evil and the good. In *that* only, the asserted similarity between the first and second parts is found. The angels, then, of the explanation answer to the fishermen of the parable. Like the conduct of natural fishermen, in sorting out the miscellaneous contents of a net-full, will be the conduct of the angels at the end of the age. Any theory, then, based on the assertion that the Saviour does not affirm the conduct of the fishermen in regard to the mixed contents of their net, to type and represent that of the angels, must be unsound.

ii. Again—previously to the severance, three conditions are specified.

1. The net's becoming full—

2. The fishermen's drawing it upon the beach.

3. The sitting down.

Now all these preliminaries are opposed to the theory.

1. It has been noticed, that the gathering of souls under the gospel, tarries not for any future period of time, but has been going forward continually since the Lord Jesus sent forth His apostles.

2. The drawing of the net out of the sea unto the shore, is an act of *power* put forth by the fishermen against the struggles of the fish. It is an act of power over both the evil and the good alike. It produces a change of *place* on all the inmates of the net. From their Gentile abodes they are dragged by force to the land of Palestine; for this, as will be shown hereafter, is the signification of the shore. Answerably whereto, the sea and the beach are both signalized by the presence of the article.

3. The sitting down is judicial—the act of judges about to award life or death; as will be seen in the sequel, when the meaning of "sitting" in Holy Scripture is exhibited.

4. In all these respects the previous conditions are destructive of the idea of ministers of the gospel being designed. But they fully fall in with the belief that these things describe the conditions under which the angels will act. As in the parable, there are *three* preliminaries before sorting the net-full, so there is *one* in the explanation. "The angels shall come forth." This accounts for the net being at first presented with no fishermen in sight. It was cast and left; but the agent or agents that cast it, had not been seen. It had seemingly been forgotten, left to drift or sway at the mercy of the waves. But, at the appointed time, the fishermen leave the house, and appear upon the beach.

5. Thus we account for the parable being placed where we find it, the last of the seven. Though it refers to the sea and the beach, yet the Saviour spoke it neither on the sea, nor on the beach, but in the house. Thus we gather, that the Lord Jesus is speaking of something posterior to the church (represented by the ship on the sea), and was treating of the

judgment of the Gentiles, an assize to be held after the housing both of Israel and the church.

iii. The theory now under consideration greatly misrepresents the *separation* effected by the fishermen. We have seen that, preparatory to the separation, the fishermen drag the fish away from their native countries to another portion of the world.

1. Their act, then, is no *spiritual* discrimination, which leaves both parties in the same localities and worldly positions as they occupied at first. It is a *bodily visible removal*, effected in spite of resistance.

2. It is an act of judgment, deciding the destiny of all the fish in the net.

It has been shown that the separation supposed is a local, worldly, final one—effected by force. To suppose this permitted now, were to allow to the disciples in the Drag-net, that which is forbidden to them in the Wheat and Tares. But it will be replied, that it is not a forcible separation which the theory supposes. How was it then that the Saviour did not guard against such a thought? How was it that He did not mark the distinction of a spiritual separation as allowable, while that of force should be forbidden here as in the other parable? But the separation, we have seen, is one of force. It is, then, effected by the same parties here, as in the Wheat and Tares—that is, by the angels. It is also a *final* separation. The separation of the ministers of the gospel is a partial and a very imperfect one. It is not final. It is rather represented as a *gathering*, than a separation: Matt. xxii. 10. It is not permitted to pass unchallenged. The king separates even from the gathered assembly the unworthy; and the angels (v. 13) carry out the mandate. If, then, two separations of different kinds are supposed, in the case before us, a spiritual and unworldly one on the one hand; and a forcible, local, and judicial severance on the other, then either the one or the other has not its counterpart in the natural scene before us. If the present and ministerial separation effected between the church and the world be predicted, the future and judicial scene of the angels is not designed. There is no separation but that in relation to

the net nor any question but as to the position of the evil and good in the world. While the net is in the sea, and even after it is on the beach, the evil are among the good; nor is it till after the casting of the evil into the furnace that the predicted end is accomplished.

“They gathered together the good into vessels, but cast the bad without.”

Will any say that but one class of fish, the good alone, is under the fisherman's hand and power for disposal, and that his work is simple discrimination, not affecting the life of the fish? Whoever does can never have beheld, methinks, the scene here supposed. What is the issue to the fish cast on the beach? Is it not manifest *death* to them? It is not fishermen's emptying a net in a boat, and throwing back into the sea those which were unsuitable to their purpose. The separation supposed is no mere *passing by* the bad fish, but forcibly *casting them away* to perish. In looking over the promiscuous assemblage of fish, the fisherman deals with each as it comes to hand; now dropping the good fish into the vessel close beside him, now flinging to a distance the useless fish. *His power over the evil is as great, then, and more conspicuous, than over the good.*

To this answers the agency of the angels in the epilogue or explanation.

The Saviour does not describe the fishermen's dealings with the useless fish as a merely passing by the evil, in order to gain the good. Had this been His object, He could have omitted all mention of the evil fish.*

* In that case He would have used a participle, in order to describe their action as merely transitory on the evil, but fixed designedly and permanently on the good. The reader may find (in the *Greek* of course) many instances of this principle in the parables before us. Take an example or two:—“Like a grain of mustard seed, which a man *having taken*, sowed in his field.” “Leaven, which a woman *having taken*, hid.” “Wilt thou, then, that *having gone away*, we gather them together?” As it is, the Lord manifests the equal and contrasted action, by a disjunctive and the verb. “They gathered the good into vessels, *but cast* the bad without.”

But no, He occupies Himself about each class with even hand, manifesting that His purpose is as much answered in the pointed agency destructive of the wicked, as it is in the collection of the good. It is a process of judgment, then, a meting out of final destiny, to each of the classes alike.

3. The only point, in short, that can apparently be reconciled to the statements of the parable, is the alleged "gathering together of the good into vessels." Now this were poor basis enough. But even this, I judge, will not stand. For why does the Saviour say "vessels," in the plural? For if the net be one, the haul but one, the agency of the ministers collective, the unity should have been kept up by affirming the receptacle of the good fish to have been a *single vessel*. To many nets and many hauls, many vessels might have corresponded; but the unity of the action, and of the agents as partakers in the same act, would seem to require the unity of the church to be displayed; in the end of the age, at latest. But the many vessels are left so to the close.

It is not true that the fishermen are engaged only with the good, the angels only with the evil. The parable and its supplement take up the lot of both as alike decided by the fishermen. The lot of the good is indeed more definitely expressed in the parable; the lot of the evil in the explanation. The reason is not hard to discover. The issue of the judgment to the justified is more in harmony with the *natural result of the scene presented*. The putting into vessels, marking the fishermen's value of the good fish, and care for their preservation, answers best to the result of the judgment to the righteous. The casting away of the evil fish, discovers only the *worthlessness* of the useless fish in the fishermen's eyes. But the death which the wicked are to suffer, is not to be one from *simple neglect*, but from *positive infliction*. Hence the case of the evil, as *least shadowed out in the parable, is most taken up in the supplement*. Fishermen in general do not cast the useless fish into a fire. And the introduction of the fire into the parable, would have given rise to thoughts

unsuited to the favourable result of the judgment to the righteous. The fire would have suggested the idea of the fishermen's cooking and eating the good fish; and wherein, then, would the lot of the good be superior to that of the evil?

To sum up, then.

1. The first view admits of no discrimination of the fish before the end of the age: or if introduced, it is without authority. And, therefore, against such an interpretation, the argument that the saints ought not to be discriminated from the world, in professedly Christian countries, holds good. The parable then offers to us the *present and necessary mixture of the good with the evil in the Church of Christ*, and upon the ordinary assumptions in regard to the parable, the deduction is good.

2. The second view would deduce as its lesson, *the present and intended discrimination of the evil from the good by ministers of the gospel*. But such conclusion is reached by a desperate leap over the main fence of the parable. While the parable has two main subjects—(1.) the mixed contents of the net before the end of the age, till the fulfilment of the appointed time—and (2.) the disposal of these contents by a certain agency then; this theory hardly denies that the supplement deals with either of these two great topics: and that it is, in effect, no explanation at all of the parable. It is, therefore, manifestly at issue with the Saviour's words, "So shall it be at the end of the age," which bind together the parable and its supplement, and make the latter the exposition of what is figurative in the former.

3. The view now to be given, arrests the conclusion of the advocates for national churches, by offering proof that it refers not to the Church of Christ at all. Not that the arrest of such a conclusion is the design of the present tract. The error that the Drag-net referred to the Church of Christ, was admitted into the former exposition of the parable, and this error it is the design of the present little treatise to counteract and correct.

1. First, then, the present parable is in its aspect Jewish. This observation is confirmed by the first view of its structure; for whereas the former parables present in general only one scene and place of operation, this has *two*—the sea and the land. Now as the gospel has but one known sphere, which is the present earth, it seems evident that the two divisions of land and water here presented are equivalent to the field. “The field is the world,” and the world is made up of land and water, the water predominating. If so, then, the natural division of land and water, instituted by God Himself, should answer to some twofold spiritual division of mankind. Such is the division of the world into Gentiles and Jews.

The Scriptures will show that such interpretation is conformable to their teaching. First, that by the sea are meant the Gentiles, is seen from Dan. vii. 2, 3. “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven strove upon *the great sea*. And four great beasts came up *from the sea*, diverse from one another.” These four wild beasts, as the prophet is informed, are the four great *Gentile kingdoms*, whose history begins after the kingdom was taken away from Israel, and was transferred to Babylon. By wild beasts from the sea are meant, therefore, ungodly empires rising from the midst of the *Gentile nations*. Perhaps also the reference is the same in the following passage, “The abundance of the *sea shall be converted* unto thee; the *forces of the Gentiles* shall come unto thee:” Isa. lx. 5.

By the beach or land, Israel is intended. For Israel, from the moment it became a people, was not to be confounded with the Gentiles. “Lo, the people, saith Balaam, shall dwell alone and *shall not be reckoned among the nations*:” Num. xxiii. 9. The sand of the sea-shore is also the constant emblem of the inspired writers when representing Israel. “In multiplying, I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and *as the sand which is upon the sea-shore*:” Gen. xxii. 17. Such were they in Solomon’s day, when the glory of the coming kingdom was shadowed forth. “Judah and Israel were many, as *the sand which is by the sea*

in multitude:” 1 Kings iv. 20. Nor is the case altered when we turn to the New Testament. “Esaias also crieth *concerning Israel*, though the number of *the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea*, the remnant shall be saved:” Rom. ix. 27. “Therefore sprang there even of one (Abraham), and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude and *as the sand* which is by the sea-shore innumerable:” Heb. xi. 12.

And beautifully does the history of the world illustrate this inspired comparison. The surges of the sea continually vex and beat upon the shore, and even thus has Israel been afflicted with wave after wave of Gentile power, and pride, and oppression. And yet in spite of all their power, the Gentiles have never prevailed to destroy Israel. They may carry them captive, as the surges of the storm may bear into the ocean’s depth much of the sand and stones of the beach. They may “gather the captivity as *the sand*,” but to destroy Israel their utmost force will not avail. It will indeed be attempted in the latter days—“Lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head. They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones. They have said, *Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more had in remembrance*. For they have consulted together with one consent; they are confederate against thee; the tabernacles of Edom and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes; Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek: the Philistines, with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assur also is joined with them; they have holpen the children of Lot:” Psal. lxxxiii. 2—8. But at this, their vain design, He that sitteth in the heavens will laugh. All their threatening demonstrations will end in failure, as truly as the war of the waves upon the beach. “Fear ye not Me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at My presence, which have *placed THE SAND FOR THE BOUND OF THE SEA by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof* toss themselves, yet can they

not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?" Jer. v. 22.

By the net cast into the sea, I am persuaded is meant the word of God. The same expression is employed regarding the net, that is used concerning the word of God in the parable of the mustard-seed. "It is like a grain of mustard-seed which a man took and *cast* into his garden:" Luke xiii. 19. "So is the kingdom of God as if a man should *cast* seed into the ground:" Mark iv. 26. In both these cases the thing "cast" represents the word of God. Nor is the resemblance only in word, or confined to this point, for the end and intention of both is the same. As the seed is cast into the ground in order to the gathering of fruit, so is the net cast into the sea with a view to the gathering of fish.

The fish of the sea, by nature free to move and range at their own will, throughout the expanse of the ocean, answer to Gentile nations. Their lawlessness in following their own vain imaginations, is by the Apostle thus described—"In time past He *suffered all nations to walk in their own ways*:" Acts xiv. 16.

II. The result of the net's being so cast, was, that it "gathered (some) of every kind" (*γενος*).

Fish are of many kinds, and were so created of God. Answerably thereto, there are many nations in the Gentile world. The kinds of fish in the sea, answer to the different nations of the Gentile world, and the same word in the Greek expresses both—"Their fish shall be according to their *kinds*, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many:" Ezek. xlvii. 10. In describing nations the word is used—"The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by *kind*:" Mark vii. 26 (*γενει*). "Barnabas, a Levite, and of the *kind* of Cyprus:" Acts iv. 36. So Acts xviii. 2, 24.

III. "Which when it was '*fulfilled*' they drew up upon the shore."

The word here translated "*fulfilled*" is that which is usually so rendered, and is the one always employed where any accomplishment of the word of God is pointed out. It is not the customary expression to

describe the filling of a net. It is, therefore, I doubt not, advisedly used in order to hint to us the real meaning of the net. If the net be the word of God, then the *filling* of the net is the *fulfilment* of the word of the Lord.

The filling of the net is accomplished with much less than the whole of the fishes of the sea; it is enough that there be some fish in it of every sort.

The netful, then, is not the fulness of the sea. That is reserved for the succeeding dispensation, when the spirit is poured forth on all flesh: when light is risen on Jerusalem and the Lord is again its glory, and Israel is re-established in His land. Then "*the abundance of the sea shall be converted to thee*, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee:" Isa. lx. 5.

IV. "Having drawn it up upon the shore, they sat down."

The net might have been emptied into boats on the sea, as in the instance of the first miraculous draught on the lake of Galilee (Luke v.). But God has ordained otherwise. As the net was carried out to sea from the shore, so will it return to the shore. As the word went forth from Judea, it will return thither. The net in the sea is the time of mystery; the net drawn upon the shore is the ceasing of the time of mystery and the beginning of the time of manifestation and disclosure. The hauling of the net ashore is miracle begun. The angels come forth to do it. To the fish enclosed within the net the drawing it on shore is a time of great trouble and of terror, as they are caught out of their natural element, into one unfit for them, and in spite of their resistance. It is worthy of notice, that in the miraculous draught of fishes after the Lord's resurrection, the netful is not emptied into boats on the sea, as in the former case, but the disciples are seen "dragging the net with fishes" to land. And still more remarkably, the place of the Lord Jesus is *not on the sea*, but *on the shore*—"But when the morning was now come, *Jesus stood on the shore*:" John xxi. 4. The time of night and

of mystery is past, and the morning presents the net returning to the shore, and Jesus standing there. When the net is landed, His feet will stand on Israel's shore, even on the mount of Olives : Zech. xiv. 4.

V. But the lifting up of the net on the shore, is only preparatory to the next process—"They *sat down*."

1. Sitting is the posture of *rule and authority*—"Assuredly, Solomon, thy son, shall reign after me, and he shall *sit upon my throne*." "Tell them who shall *sit on the throne* of my Lord the King after Him:" 1 Kings i. 13, 20. "When He *was set*, His disciples came unto Him, and He opened His mouth and taught them:" Matt. v. 1. "Grant that these my two sons *may sit*, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on the left in Thy kingdom:" Matt. xx. 21.

2. But especially is it the attitude of *judgment*—"And it came to pass on the morrow, that *Moses sat to judge the people*: and the people stood by Moses from the morning until the evening:" Ex. xviii. 13. "Speak ye that ride on white asses, *ye that sit in judgment*:" Judges v. 10. "When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and *sat down on the judgment seat*:" John xix. 13. Festus, "on the next day, *sitting on the judgment seat*, commanded Paul to be brought:" Acts xxv. 6. "I beheld till the thrones were set (*ερεθισαν*), and the Ancient of Days *did sit*. The *judgment was set* and the books were opened. The *judgment shall sit*, and they shall take away his dominion:" Dan. vii. 9, 10, 26.

We are permitted to know the especial spot in which judgment will take place. It is Jerusalem and the valley of Jehoshaphat. "Assemble yourselves and come all ye Gentiles, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause Thy mighty ones (the angels) to come down, O Lord. Let the Gentiles be awakened and come up to THE VALLEY OF JEHOSEPHAT, for there will I sit to judge all the Gentiles round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe; come, get you down, for the press is full, the vats

overflow; for their wickedness is great:" Joel iii. 11—13. Thus does the net return to the shore for judgment, and the judgment takes place in the land whence the net was first cast forth.

VI. The result of the judgment is then stated—"They gathered together the good into vessels, but cast the bad *without*."

The issue of the session and assize is, that the evil were gathered out from amongst the good. For the law instituted a division between the fishes of the sea—condemning some as evil, and allowing others as good. "These shall ye eat of all that are in the waters: whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, and in the seas, and in the rivers, *them shall ye eat*: and all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an *abomination to you*:" Lev. xi. 9—13.

The present mystery that overhangs God's dealings with Jew and Gentile, is one day to be scattered, and the place of manifestation of His righteous judgment is to be the land of Israel. There is the place where the Great King will be seated upon His throne: there the furnace of fire which will enclose His enemies. This completes the Jewish aspect of the whole. For where do the prophets declare that "*the furnace*" of God will be in the day of His kingdom? "Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross: all they are brass and tin and iron and lead in the *midst of the furnace*; they are even the dross of silver. Therefore thus saith the Lord God: Because ye are all become dross, behold *therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem*. As they gather silver and brass and iron and lead and tin into the *midst of the furnace*, so will I gather you in Mine anger and in My fury, and I will leave you there and melt you. . . . As silver is melted in the *midst of the furnace*, so shall ye be melted in the *midst thereof*:" Ezek. xxii. 18—22. This refers to the judgments on the Jews before those on the Gentiles; but the following quotations establish not only what the verse just cited does

—that Jerusalem is the place of the furnace—but also that it is prepared for the Gentiles and the enemies of the kingdom in general. “As birds flying, so will the Lord of Hosts defend *Jerusalem*. Turn ye to Him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted. Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword not of a mighty man, and the sword not of a mean man shall devour him saith the Lord, *whose fire is in Zion, AND HIS FURNACE IN JERUSALEM:*” Isa. xxxi. 5, 6, 8, 9. The same time is spoken of by Malachi (chap. iii. 18, and iv. 1). But the Jewish character of the furnace is seen very fully in passages yet to be cited—“For Tophet is ordained of old: yea, for the king it is prepared, he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood: the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it:” xxx. 33. And again most unequivocally is its connexion with Jerusalem seen in Isaiah lxvi.: “They shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the Lord out of all nations *to My holy mountain Jerusalem* and it shall come to pass that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth and *look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against Me*; for their worm shall not die, *neither shall their fire be quenched*, and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh:” Isa. lxvi. 20, 23, 24.

As the net left the shore for the sea, so will it again leave the sea, to return, as its natural and fitting resting-place, to the shore. God’s platform for the exhibition of justice and the manifestation of righteous retribution is Israel’s land—the subjects of His judgments are His people Israel. His dealing in mercy is the time of mystery. Iniquity is suffered to advance and grow great and haughty, and to sin on with a high hand, yet it is not smitten. Mercy spares. But then this is the very effect of *mercy*, that its time of continuance must be a time of *mystery*. Man looks for *righteous retribution*, and not finding it, at length

he will draw the evil inference of a blinded heart, that God strikes not the sinner, because, happy in Himself, He does not concern Himself with the affairs of the puny insects of time; or because He is a being of love alone, unmixed with any feelings of justice. But when the word of God returns to the Jew, retribution begins, and God’s righteousness is manifested.

It is interesting to remark, as confirming this view of the respective references of the sea and of the shore, that the Saviour moved from one towards the other as Israel’s unbelief grew more and more decided, and was more and more openly expressed. His movement towards the sea occurred after the scene of the healing of the palsied man in Capernaum, when His profession of a power to pardon sin drew forth from the bystanders the murmurs that He was blaspheming. Then we read, “And He went forth again *by the sea side*; and all the multitude resorted unto Him, and He taught them:” Mark ii. 1—3. This motion towards the sea is more decided on the next occasion, when He had cured on the Sabbath day the man who had a withered hand, in the presence of those who watched Him. Their malice being stimulated by His triumphant exposure of their hypocrisy, “The Pharisees went forth and took counsel with the Herodians against Him how they might destroy Him.” This was a fearful step of unbelief and enmity, and Jesus’ corresponding attitude becomes more marked: “And Jesus *withdrew Himself with His disciples to the sea*:” Mark iii. 6, 7. But in the close of this chapter the rage of His enemies breaks forth into blaspheming against the Holy Ghost, and now Jesus “*entered into a ship and sat on the sea, and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land*:” Mark iv. 1. How characteristic the position! Jesus was, in a figure, *retreating further and further from Israel towards the Gentiles*. His attitude was one of mystery, no less than His words; for it was while thus seated in the sea that He began to speak in parables; *addressing indeed those on the land but still seated on the sea*. It was as if He had said to Israel—“Your last hopes

are departing ; you have driven Me from the midst of you ; you have plotted My death ; you have rejected My message ; and now I turn towards the Gentiles."

The parable describes a scene of judgment at the end of the age. It is also a mystery of the kingdom. Now the judgment of the Jews in the day of the Lord is not a mystery, but foretold by their prophets. The judgment of the church has been already foretold in the Wheat and Tares. If this be the judgment of the church, "there is nothing new here," as Calvin says. But the Saviour speaks of it as something new. "*Again*, the kingdom of heaven is like." It is not the manner of Scripture in treating of things already handled, to be less detailed in the former passages than in the latter. On the contrary, as we should naturally expect, the later discoveries of the mind of God are more full than the earlier. Thus the parable of the Wedding Garment is more full than that of the Great Supper: Matt. xxii. ; Luke xiv. Thus, too, the prophecy of Matt. xxiv., or Luke xxi., is much more detailed than the earlier prediction contained in Luke xvii. Nor is it at all credible that Jesus' words to the *multitude* should be more detailed and express than to His *disciples* in the house. But if the Drag-net treats only of the same judgment of the church as the Tares, the latter picture is but a mutilated copy of the former.

I. For while they agree, in that both are of a double structure, consisting of the figure and its explanation, and both refer to the end of the age, and both have the angels as the executioners of judgment, and both offer the results to the evil and the good, there are yet very many omissions in the latter as compared with the former.

1. There is no cultivation in the one, as in the other ; no sowing, since the sea is not the place for it.

2. The Wheat and Tares is the history of the rival agencies of the owner of the field, and of his foe. The main question of the parable is, how the proprietor could reconcile the ill state of his field with wisdom, or power, or care for his property. No such inquiry

arises in the Drag-net. There are, by nature, evil as well as good fish in the sea.

3. Again, in the Tares there is a ripening of the counterfeit seed, a development in iniquity, a coming forth from the comparative likeness to the wheat. It is not so in the Drag-net. All this is accounted for, if those Gentiles, to whom the gospel of the grace of God has never been sent, be intended.

4. The intermediate state of things calls up the difficulty in the Tares, and is answered by the promise, that in the end of the age the seeming anomalies shall be disposed of. Judgment at the close shall answer why the tares were spared. But in the Drag-net the intermediate time is hardly noticed ; the great point is the mode and principle of judgment.

5. In the Wheat and Tares two classes of servants appear, and the master. In the latter no master is seen, nor any class of agents but one.

6. The glory of the righteous, in the higher or heavenly department of the kingdom, is exhibited in the Tares, but not in the Drag-net. Both the evil fish and the good are left upon the beach. This is, to my mind, decisive, as proving that the Drag-net refers to the judgment of the Gentiles, or the elect subjects of the kingdom on earth, and not to the Church.

7. The Saviour closes the Tares with a word of exhortation to His hearers—"Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." This intimates distinctly the application of that parable to those about Him. But no such word closes the Net. This is equally well accounted for, if, on the latter occasion, the Lord was speaking of a judgment in which His hearers were not personally interested.

II. But now compare the Net with the Sheep and Goats, and the two will be found beautifully to harmonize.

1. The Drag-net is a miniature picture of the more full and expanded Sheep and Goats.

2. The parables of both Matthew xxiv., xxv., and

Matthew xiii., are occupied about the judgments of the end of the age, as affecting the Church and the Gentiles. The case of the Gentiles, as the least practical, is the least handled, and in both cases is placed last, as the last event in the old age, ere the glorious enjoyment of the kingdom, or the new age.

3. At the close of the age, the division of the world into Jew and Gentile, so necessary for fulfilling the descriptions of the prophets, and the promises to Abraham—distinctions which had been put aside for awhile, during the dispensation of the Church of God—now re-appear. The unbelief of the Jew was the cause of the hiding of the Treasure; which appears in the first parable of the second series. But the Pearl exhibits the Jew returned to faith, and then appropriately comes in the adjustment of the long-pending controversy between the Jew and the Gentile. "If ye will not believe surely ye shall not be established," was the sentence on the nation. When, then, they do believe, the firm establishment of all the promises of God in His kingdom of glory, is no more delayed.

4. The parables are both alike in their great subject—the gathering of the nations from their several lands to the land of Israel, in order to judgment. The parties judged in the Sheep and Goats are "all the nations," or "all the Gentiles." By this is meant just what is intended by the net's gathering "some of every kind." It is manifest to every student of the prophets, that there has yet to be assembled at Jerusalem an armed host of all nations, whose impious purpose is to destroy Jerusalem, and undo the designs of God by the destruction of the nation of the Jews. This body is called "all nations:" Zech. xiv. 2; xii. 3. By this is meant, evidently, only *some* of all nations, for women and children and old men go not forth to battle. That godless host is destroyed by the sudden descent of the Lord Jesus, without the formality of a trial—they are the king's foes, taken and slain with arms in their hands. It is the remnant of all

nations, who have not gone forth to that warfare, that is judged here.*

5. The terms that occur in the two parables are in several cases the same, in the same connection, and almost in the same order. There is in each a gathering, and a session in order to a judicial separation.† In both the separation is the work of angels on a medley of good and evil. In both "the just" appear, and the lot of the unjust is eternal "fire."

6. The assembling of the parties from places distant from each other, and bringing them to another spot for judgment, is the decisive point in proof of the connection of the Drag-net with the Sheep and Goats, and its disjunction from the Tares. In the Sheep and Goats a judicial separation is going on, affecting both good and evil promiscuously. In the Tares there is a succession of actions, affecting first the evil, and then the just. In the other two parables the angels gather both good and evil confusedly out of their native countries into the land of Israel, ere the judgment begins. But in the Tares, judgment begins suddenly on the spot in which both are growing. In the Tares the two classes are not judged in each others' presence; here one and the same place of earth witnesses the sentence on both. The judgment of the saints of Christ takes place in His Presence on high after the resurrection. Into neither the Drag-net, nor the Sheep and Goats, does the resurrection enter.

7. The very differences between them are harmonious. In the Drag-net the angels separate the good from the evil fish. In the Sheep and Goats, the Son of man severs the mingled mass. In both the *assembling* is effected by other hands than His. The parable of the Sheep and Goats begins at a later point than the Drag-net. It supposes the net full, the haul made, the landing on shore effected, and the mingled company before the eye of the chief fisherman. In

* The words take the same sense in the prophecy on Olivet: xxiv. 9, 14; xxviii. 12; Rom. i. 5; xvi. 26, and elsewhere.

† Συναγειν. Καθίζω. Αφορίζω.

the Drag-net the principle of separation is grounded on a difference of nature—they are distinguished as good or worthless fish. So is it in the other parable: they are severed by Christ, as by the intelligence which enables the shepherd to detect at once the difference of nature between sheep and goats. But in this latter parable, the *principle* on which Christ adjudicates comes into view, and the king produces the *works* of each, as the fit proof of their differing *natures*, and as a ground of decision commending itself irresistibly to the conscience of both the parties. In uttering the Sheep and Goats, Jesus was overlooking the very spot foretold as the place of the judgment. In pronouncing the Drag-net, the place of the decision is more distantly hinted as a Jewish locality.

8. The Drag-net gives the two *scenes* of judgment—the Sheep and Goats, the *principle* of judgment and its application. The first gives its connection with the end of the age—the last its connection with the Lord's appearing. The Drag-net is a similitude of the kingdom. It concerns the Gentile subjects of Messiah, who will people the world during His kingdom, and discovers to us the process of judicial decision through which they must pass at the end of the age, ere they are admitted into the kingdom. The crisis of judgment at the introduction of the Gentiles to Messiah's realm, will resemble the process of separation adopted by fishermen. It will find good and evil mingled, and the evil shall not enter the kingdom. It gives the preparation made by God for the Gentiles' judgment, in the word spoken ages before to Abraham: the Sheep and Goats exhibits only the process of judgment. The Drag-net presents the judgment of the Gentiles as distinguished from the Jews, and as tested by them, in virtue of their being the seed of Abraham.

The land was called forth from the sea emblematically in Abraham's day: and the net was cast at the same time by the hand of God. Let us turn to God's first covenant with Abraham, and the whole matter will receive much light.

GENESIS XII.

1.	Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee.
2.	And I will make of thee a great nation.
3.	And I will bless thee.
4.	And I will make thy name great.
5.	And thou shalt be a blessing.
6.	And I will bless them that bless thee, And curse him that curseth thee.
7.	And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.
8.	Unto thy seed will I give this land.

If we consider No. 1 as rather a command than a promise, No. 2 was fulfilled during Israel's sojourn in Egypt, before the law: Deut. xxvi. 5. No. 3 is a personal promise fulfilled to Abraham in his lifetime: Gen. xxiv. 35. The name of Abraham was made great, perhaps we may say, when Israel was taken into covenant under the law, and the land given to his descendants by miracle. No. 5 is supposed by Paul to be fulfilled in the gifts of the Holy Ghost bestowed on the sons of Abraham by faith (Gal. iii., especially verse 14). No. 7 is also adduced by the apostle (in the same chapter, iii. 8), as speaking the language of the gospel; not that the gospel fulfils its meaning wholly. But the good news of the gospel is thrown open to all the families of the earth; and in becoming the sons of Abraham by faith, blessing is thrown open to all.

In No. 6 occur the words which, I judge, the Lord Jesus had in His eye, in speaking of the net in the parable before us. Each net has its cork and its lead, and the covenant before us carries a blessing and a

curse to the Gentiles, according to their dealings with Abraham and his seed. After the promise, then, that describes gospel times (No. 5), come the blessing and the curse (No. 6), or the test whereby (in the crisis that follows the gospel, at the end of the age) the Most High will judge the nations; and then succeeds the time of blessing to all the families of the earth (No. 7), or the Saviour's millennial kingdom, during which Christ, the promised seed of Abraham, will possess the land. First comes the test of the families of the earth, then the blessing of such as have fulfilled (through grace) its condition.

Jesus, as the heir of the land, judges in the land. The fish receive their destiny on the beach.

In this manner the controversy between the seed of Abraham (his two-fold seed of nature and of faith) is finished. God foretold, at the ratification of the covenant of promise (Gen. xv.), that his seed should be strangers, and afflicted; but that their oppressors, after the appointed time, should be judged, when iniquity was come to the full, and then the land should be possessed. This was partially fulfilled in the Exodus from Egypt, but a yet more special accomplishment awaits it when both classes of Abraham's seed shall receive the inheritance.

This is, I apprehend, the reason why Jesus in His parables, both of Matt. xiii., and of xxiv. and xxv. binds together the question, of Israel, the Church, and the Gentiles, as all included in the great covenant of promise, and all, in their several spheres, partakers of the kingdom in which that covenant will receive its full development.

The principle of the blessing or the curse on the Gentiles, according to their treatment of the Jew, is seen receiving its partial fulfilment in the Old Testament. The kings carry captive Lot, and are cut off by Abraham; to Jacob (the true seed) the promise is made again (Gen. xxvii. 29), and Esau threatening him, is cast out of the land of promise, and the Edomites, his descendants, for their violence against Israel are to be cut off for ever, and their land,

amidst the glory of the millennial earth, is to be a place of barrenness, desolation, and burning. The reader can pursue the inquiry for himself, noting the cases of Balaam, the Kenites, Babylon, the Persians. Rahab on the one hand, and Balaam on the other, furnish individual examples.

The mystery of the parable appears to be, the discovery that the Lord would enter into judgment with the Gentiles, not as a question of force alone, in opposition to their armed demolition of Jerusalem and destruction of His people, but that He would bring to bear upon the nations in general, that word which he had spoken before to Abraham, long seemingly forgotten, but yet really the turning-point of the destiny of those to whom the gospel of the grace of God has not been preached.*

The Jews, in general, seem to regard Messiah's kingly and warlike destruction of the Gentile as the only point of contact with them preparatory to the kingdom; *this* discloses Messiah as the judge of Gentiles. And here lies the marvel which is expounded in the Sheep and Goats how any of them can be justified.

The Lord Jesus traces the various scenes that are to fill the period of mystery, till the time of manifestation (or the end of the age) arrives. It was quite in keeping, therefore, with this, that that design of God by which the elect Gentiles will be made partakers of the earthly kingdom, should be mentioned, and mentioned last. It was a question of intelligence concerning both the Jew and the Church. The controversy between God and the Jew is still unsettled. He refuses to accept the righteousness of God, and holds fast (like Job) his own. Hence they are exposed to all the trials of Gentile dominion. But when (as Paul represents) they accept the righteousness of God, dominion passes away from the Gentiles, and the long outstanding controversy between them is settled by God.

* Not that the saved among the Gentiles here set forth have no word of God given them to believe. They are, as I judge, those who receive the tidings preached by the angel (Rev. xiv. 6, 7) of the kingdom, and its preceding judgments.

DIVINE ARRANGEMENT OF THE PARABLES.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS.

I WOULD now add a few words concerning the connexion of the series of parables taken as a whole. There are seven parables in Matthew, which is the number of *Jewish perfection*; and to these is added another by Mark. Let us first consider those of Matthew. Here we find that the last six are of one character, and that the first stands distinguished from the rest. All the parables except that of the Sower are similitudes of the kingdom of heaven: but that is not. It is, therefore, principally to the six last that the remarks that follow will be directed.

I. First, then, the order of the parables is *chronological*: or they are recorded in the order in which they were fulfilled or are fulfilling. Not indeed that the order is chronological in one continued sweep from the first to the sixth; but it divides itself into two equal series of three each. Take first the parable of the Sower; that was fulfilled and fulfilling when it was spoken: and was chronologically the first of all. The Tares take up the subject at a later point than the Sower and carry it on further into the future. Again, Satan began to sow his tares of heresy and nominal Christianity before the visible church began to exhibit externally its worldly pomp and show, as represented by the Mustard-tree. Next the Mustard-seed had begun to show itself greater than a herb, and the birds to roost in it, ere the Woman hid the Leaven in the meal. At this point ends the first series.

In the second series the Treasure Hid has chronologically the first place, for the action of that

For the convenience of further study, an analysis of the three Parables most in question is given below.			
WHEAT AND TARES.		DRAG-NET.	SHEEP AND GOATS.
1. Good seed sown. Enemy sows tares.	1.	Net had been cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind.	1.
2. Zizan (tares) appears.			
3. Servants' first inquiry. How is this? Ans. The deed of an enemy.			
4. Servants' second inquiry. Shall we pluck up the tares? Ans. No.—Reason.			
5. Their destiny in harvest.			
EXPLANATION IN THE HOUSE.			
6. Seven points expounded.			
7. As the tares are gathered and burnt, so in the end of the age. Angels sent, and they gather out evil things and men from the kingdom, and cast into the fire. Then the righteous shine. Let the hearer attend!		When it was full, drawn on shore, and the good severed from evil fish.	2. { King's address to Sheep. Question of Sheep. King's reply.
			3. {
			4. {
			5. { King's address to Goats. Question of Goats. King's reply.
			6. {
			7. {
		So shall it be at the end of the age. The angels come and sever the evil from the good, and cast them into the fire.	8. These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into everlasting life.

parable was complete, ere that of the Pearl began. The merchant was indeed seeking, ere the Lord Jesus left the world or even entered it, but the peculiar action of the parable did not begin till after the Lord Jesus had bought the field and left it. His righteousness could not be found by any till it was completed by His resurrection and exhibited by the Spirit. In brief, Jesus purchases the field ere the Jew purchases the pearl, and the pearl is purchased ere the net is drawn on shore. The intermediate space of time from its commencement is occupied, as it regards every believer of Israel, in finding and purchasing the righteousness of Messiah. The three first of the six parables, as I judge, give the *beginning, increase, and final corruption of the dispensation among the Gentiles*; displaying the Gentiles as found wanting, and God's mercy (though in secret) as still with the Jew, and finally returning to him openly.

II. It is again worthy of notice that the six parables before us fall into two sets of three when we look at the words by which they are introduced to us. Their introductions are as follows :—

1. Tares.

"Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened."—

2. Mustard-seed.

"Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like."—

3. Leaven.

"Another parable spake He unto them, saying,—The kingdom of heaven is like."—

These were spoken also, as a further note of discrimination and of difference, *to the multitude*; the three which succeed, *to the disciples* in the house—And now observe the difference of the introduction—

4. Treasure hid.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like."—

5. The Pearl.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like."—

6. The Drag-net.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like."—

Thus it is evident, as before, that they fall into two sets, consisting of three in each.—

III. But viewed in other lights, they take other symmetrical positions. Thus, when we consider them as *Jewish* or *Gentile* in their aspect, we shall find that the first and last are partly Gentile and partly Jewish; that the second and third, or the Mustard-seed and Leaven, are Gentile; and the fourth and fifth, or the Treasure and the Pearl, are Jewish.

IV. If we regard them as exhibiting objects or scenes for the display of *justice* and *mercy*; we shall find that the Tares and the Drag-net again correspond; the Tares presenting mercy—sparing the Tares; and justice—the final award to the Wheat on the one hand, and to the Tares on the other: and the Drag-net presenting to our view justice and mercy in the consignment of the good fish to the vessels, and of the evil to a lingering death on the sand. The Mustard-seed and the Leaven evidently call for justice as their fit recompense: the Treasure and the Pearl present mercy alone.

V. We may regard them as disclosing scenes of *good* and *evil*. Then do the Tares discover the blending of good and evil by Satan; and the Drag-net the separation of the evil and the good by the *holy angels*. The Mustard-seed and Leaven display that which was originally good, overborne by final evil and corruption.

The Treasure and the Pearl on the other hand show us scenes of good alone.

VI. Or we may view them as it regards their *fulfilment*, and that from a double point of view; first, as it regards the state of their accomplishment *while the Saviour was speaking them*; and secondly, their *present* state of fulfilment or non-fulfilment. Then we shall find that at the time the Saviour delivered them, the Tares and Mustard-seed were partly fulfilled and partly not: the Leaven was wholly unfulfilled. The Treasure and the Pearl were partly fulfilled and partly not.

If we arrange them on the time of present fulfilment, the Tares and the Drag-net are partially fulfilled, but the issue still remains unfulfilled: the Mustard-seed

and the Leaven have both been fulfilled, yet still continue to be accomplishing in the present state of the visible church. And the Treasure and the Pearl have been fulfilled in a sense already.

VII. If we consider them as it respects their respective spheres, or the place in which the scene is laid, we shall find a like orderly arrangement. The scene of the Tares and Mustard-seed lies in the field; the Pearl and the Drag-net have two localities; first the sea and then the land. The Leaven and Treasure (the two intermediate ones) have opposite spheres; the Leaven, the house; the Treasure, the field.

VIII. Or if we take the series as one of seven then the "*man*" is expressly the agent in the Tares and Mustard-seed, the Treasure and the Pearl. The middle one is occupied by a different agent: for the Leaven offers to us the deed of the "*woman*." Lastly, the two extremes, the Sower and the Drag-net, disclose the agency of "*man*" without the direct introduction of the term, as fitly as the other four expressly introduce it.

IX. But we may regard them as a series of eight, by introducing the remaining parable of the seed growing secretly, which is given by Mark alone. The place of this in the series is easily found: for both Matthew and Mark give the parable of the Mustard-seed, which is the third in Matthew. As then Mark places the Seed growing secretly before the Mustard-seed, we find its position, when it is one of eight, to be third; and that of the Mustard-seed falls into the fourth place. This arrangement also is beautiful; for thus we have all the four parables which speak of the Seed arranged together: and those which carry on each others' meaning are arranged alternately. The Sower and the Seed growing, describe to us the good seed; the first in its present state, the second in its final disposal. The Tares and the Mustard-seed show us the evil result that follows on the sowing of the good seed: the Mustard-seed giving us its present state, the Tares the final award.

The four last parables also fall together, all describing

something more or less hidden; the two first, something hidden and not manifest; the two last, something hidden and manifest. The Leaven turns on a *production, even flour*, of which the succeeding parable gives the *place*, its scene being the *field*. The Pearl turns on a *production, even the pearl*, of which the succeeding parable gives the *place*, its scene being the *sea*. And the flour, as a vegetable production, answers to the pearl, an animal production.

X. But I must now proceed to notice the *contrasted* parables taken as a series of six. The three first exhibit the hand of Satan and of men for evil; the other three the hand of God for good. The three first exhibit the effects of the devil, the flesh, and the world in corrupting Christianity. The Mustard-seed and Leaven give the perverseness of men, as is proved by the Saviour's question prefixed to each: "Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? and with what comparison shall we compare it?" Mark iv., Luke xiii. This has been shown in the parable of the Mustard-seed to signify the difficulty of finding any object amidst the regular and orderly processes of nature, that would at all correspond to the unruliness of men.

Of these, the Mustard-seed presents the *external appearance* of the evil; the Leaven, the *ruling internal principles* of evil, imbuing every part of the visible church. Thus, Jesus to the perverse multitude sets forth parables which exhibit man's perverseness: but to the disciples the goodness of God. "With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward:" Psalm xviii.

1. The Mustard-seed is the contrast to the Treasure; the Leaven to the Pearl. The Mustard-seed and the Leaven exhibit the *spurious* "kingdom of heaven" attended by its *false doctrine and self-righteousness*. The Treasure and the Pearl present the *true* "kingdom of God," attended with its *true righteousness*. The Treasure hid presents the true kingdom as concealed; the Mustard-seed shews the spurious kingdom of forbidden pomp and power and worldliness, as manifest now. That the spurious should have its manifestation

before the true, is according to a principle of the mind of God, who has decreed the development of things earthly and fallen before that of things heavenly and restored ; as it is written, "Howbeit that was *not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural*, and afterward that which is spiritual : " 1 Cor. xv. 46. The Treasure exhibits the kingdom as proposed to the Jew, and one day to be manifested and enjoyed by him. The Mustard-seed exhibits the actual state of Christ's kingdom in mystery among the Gentiles, and its opposition to the appearance which it ought to have presented. In the Treasure, the rightful owner takes his leave of the field. In the Mustard-seed the usurping birds come and take full possession. The owner of the Treasure strips himself of all he has and goes his way. The birds come and take that as their own which belongs to another. The right of the owner is in abeyance. The trespass of the birds is actual.

The Treasure hid exhibits the surrender of justly deserved greatness. The Mustard-seed the assumption of forbidden greatness. The one shews the disciples' prohibited greatness : the other, the master's voluntary humility ; the world redeemed is the result of the latter ; the entrance and lodgment of the angels of Satan is the consequence of the other. Of the true kingdom it is said, "I saw *thrones* and they sat upon them : " Rev. xx. 4. But in the spurious kingdoms the bishops erected their *thrones*, even as early as the third century. "The bishops assumed in many places a *princely authority*. . . . They appropriated to their evangelical functions the splendid ensigns of temporal majesty. A *throne* surrounded by ministers, exalted above his equals the servant of the meek and humble Jesus ; and sumptuous garments dazzled the eyes and the minds of the multitude into an ignorant veneration for their arrogated authority : "—Mosheim, Cent. iii. c. 2, § 4.

2. The Leaven and the Pearl are likewise contrasted. The Leaven is the characteristic contribution of the daughter of men ; the Pearl is the gift of the Son of God. The Leaven is corrupt, the Pearl incorruptible ; the Leaven debases, the Pearl enriches and ennobles ;

the Leaven is hid, the Pearl manifested. The one is the *empress of the world, corrupting the Gentiles* : the other is the *Creator of the world justifying the Jew*. The Leaven exhibits the pure made impure ; the Pearl the ungodly made righteous. *The Leaven is the new corrupted by the old : the Pearl is the old made perfect by the new*. The Leaven is the forbidden abomination introduced secretly ; the Pearl is the required perfection displayed and obtained. *The Pearl is the law and the flesh led on to the gospel* : the Leaven is the gospel led back to the law and the flesh.

I think, too, that further contrasts are intended between the Mustard-seed and the Pearl ; for therein Gentile disobedience stands opposed to Jewish faith. Likewise between the Leaven and the Treasure hid : the Leaven exhibiting Rome's work ; the Treasure, the work of Christ ; the world redeemed by the head of the church being the subject of the one, and the church corrupted by the head and mistress of the world, being the subject of the other.

The result of the whole leaves the Gentile no room for boasting. How heavily does the balance incline against us ! For how does the Saviour characterize the final issue of the dispensation among the Gentiles ? As a self-exalted tree, filled with the enemies of the sower, and the lord of the field ; as a lump penetrated from centre to circumference by the leaven of the flesh and of the law ! The other parables show that the heart of God is still covertly with the Jew : and that the time is not far off when he shall stand forth again, the perpetual witness of the mercy that first chose his fathers !

SUMMARY.

To the Multitudes.	External connection.	Jewish and Gentile.	Good & Evil (blending.)	Fulfillment THEN.	Fulfillment NOW.	Mercy & justice	Scenes.
(1 Tares	"Another parable, &c."	Part Gent. pt. Jew	Good & Evil	Partial	Partial	Mercy, justice	Field
(2 Mustard-seed	"Another parable, &c."	Gentile	Evil	Partial	Fulfilling & fulfilled	Justice, future	Field
(3 Leaven	"Another parable, &c."	Gentile	Evil	Unfulfilled	Fulfilling & fulfilled	Justice, future	House ...
To the Disciples.							
(4 Treasure hid. "Again the kingdom," Jewish		Jewish	Good	Partial	Fulfilled	Mercy, present	Field
(5 Pearl	"Again the kingdom," Jewish	Jewish	Good (separation)	Partial	Fulfilled	Mercy, present	Sea & land
(6 Drag-net	"Again the kingdom," Part Gent. pt. Jew	Part Gent. pt. Jew	Good & Evil	Unfulfilled	Partial	Justice, mercy	Sea & land

Unseen individual results.	
1 Sower.....	{ Evil Angels, }
2 Tares.....	{ Man implied }
3 Mustard-seed	Man.....
4 Leaven	Man.....
5 Treasure	Woman.....
6 Pearl	Man.....
7 Drag-net	Man.....
	{ Man implied }
	{ Good Angels }
Open and collective results.	
	{ 1 Sower..... Devil, World, Flesh.
	{ 2 Tares..... Devil.
	{ 3 Mustard-seed
	{ 4 Leaven
	{ 5 Treasure
	{ 6 Pearl
	{ 7 Drag-net
	{ 8 Redemption.....
	{ 9 Election.....
	{ 10 Justification.....
	{ 11 Glorification.....

LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD

THE ORDER OF REWARD;

OR THE

PARABLE

OF THE

EXPLAINED:

THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD.

Matt. xx, 1.

“ For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man, an householder, who went out early in the morning (at sunrise¹) to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius the day², he sent them into his vineyard. || And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place, and said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is just,³ I will give you. And they went their way. || Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. || But about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him. Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is just,³ shall ye receive. || Now when evening was come the Lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, call the laborers, and pay them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every one a denarius. But when the first came they supposed that they shall receive⁴ more, and they likewise received every one a denarius. But when they had received it, they murmured against the householder, ⁵ saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, who have borne the burden of the day, and the heat. || But he answered and said unto one of them, Comrade,⁶ I do thee no wrong: didst thou not agree with me for a denarius? Take up⁷ that which is thine, and go thy way: I am determined⁸ to give to this last even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye envious⁹ because I am good? (bountiful)¹⁰ || So the last shall be first, and the first last; for many are called, but few chosen.” ||

Before entering on the work of interpretation, let me devote a few lines to the consideration of the structure of

¹ Αμα πρωι. ² Δηναριου την ημεραν. ³ Δικαιον. ⁴ Αηψονται.
⁵ Του οικοδοσπουτου. ⁶ Εταιρε. ⁷ Αρον. ⁸ Θελω. ⁹ Πονηρος.
¹⁰ Αγαθος.

the parable. Like most of the other parables of St. Matthew, it is composed of seven parts; the four first giving the preliminary part, or time of preparation: the three latter giving the conclusion, the time of recompence, or the result in general. This is beautifully shown in the parables of Matthew xiii. Those which carry on the scheme to its conclusion, and present to us the day of recompence—viz., the parables of the tares and drag-net—have the *seven* divisions, while the four intermediate ones, that break off abruptly, and give no display of the day of reward, are composed of the *four* first portions alone.

The seven portions of the present parable have been already presented to the reader, by the cross bars by which it is marked. But the following table will show the verbal relations of its parts at a glance: the real and intellectual harmonies of its structure are not displayed here:—

Matt. xx.	No. of Parts.	Divisions.	As series of seven.	As a series of six.		
1 2	1	First order of Laborers.	He went out.	Agreement.	Vineyard.	Jews.
3 4	2	Second	Ditto.	Hour.	Vineyard.	Go away
5	3	Third and Fourth.	Ditto.	Hour.	—	
6 7	4	Fifth.	Ditto.	Hour.	Vineyard.	Go away
8—12	5	Hire paid. Murmur of Laborers.	The last.	Hour.	Vineyard.	
13—15	6	Answer of Master.	Ditto.	Agreement.	—	Go away
16	7	Lesson.	Ditto.	—	—	—

Here some of the agreements in words of the various divisions are pointed out. The four first are characterized by the householder's going out; in the three concluding

divisions, the connecting word is, "the last." In the divisions (omitting the seventh, which is in character distinct from the rest,) considered as a series of six, the "hour" occupies the four middle ones; the "agreement," the first and last. "The vineyard" appears symmetrically in the first and second, being omitted in the third; and again it appears in the fourth and fifth, being correspondingly omitted in the sixth.

But these are agreements of *words* alone; the beautiful harmony of the *sense* will also appear on further comparison; into which this is not the place to enter, further than to note, that the hire and work are comprehended in the first four divisions; the payment in the concluding portions. And as the first great division gives the *order of hiring*: so does the last give the *order of reward*, which is the most important *prophetic* aspect of the parable. The three closing divisions give us, first, (in the 5th,) the order of payment *appointed*; secondly, (in the 6th and 7th,) the order of payment *justified*. In the 6th it is justified to the *laborers*; in the 7th it is justified in its application to *us*. The first and third divisions are related to each other, and the second and fourth, as is usual in the parables.

But let us now proceed to the interpretation.

And first, a word as to the principle. It is assumed that every word of the parable is appropriate, and has its exact accomplishment, whether we can discern it or not. The contrary principle is, however, commonly propounded, and as this is a difficult parable, so here especially may we find the avowal of it.

Thus then we read in one learned commentary, (and like expressions appear elsewhere,) as follows:—"Having now noted both the general and special meaning of the parable, it were of no benefit scrupulously to discuss the circumstances of the parable. 'For in the parables,' says Chrysostom, speaking of this very one, 'we ought not anxiously to vex ourselves about details, but when we know what the Lord intends to teach by a parable, we may then, discerning its use, omit any further anxious investigation.'

We should therefore discriminate the principal circumstances bearing on the lesson of the parable from the secondary which regard only the history of the parable itself."

It is therefore of importance to show that every phrase and word used has reference to the prophetic teaching and moral lessons of the parable; and that the principle holds good even in this peculiarly difficult instance, in which so many have thought that it could not apply.

The parable is a Jewish one, intended to display to Israel that God had chosen Gentiles to be his people no less than themselves; and that not all even of themselves, would obtain part in the future kingdom.

The householder—the principal person of the parable, is God the Father. He is so represented (as is confessed by all) in the parable of the wicked husbandmen: Matt. xxi, 33. That he is signified there is evident from the introduction of his Son, who is slain. Here he is in like manner identified by the introduction of another, who is his steward, to whom is committed the payment of the laborers. Now as the rewarding of the people of God is committed to the Son, the master of the house can be none other than the Father: Rev. xxii, 12; ii, 7, 10, 17, &c.

The going forth of the householder answers to God's leaving the silence of his Majesty to reveal himself, and to make appeal to men in the matter of their salvation. The first going forth was at sunrise, or six o'clock; the second at the third hour, or nine; the third at twelve and at three; the fourth at five o'clock.

I. The first going forth was in the days of Abraham. Accordingly, we read in the eleventh chap. of Genesis, of God's coming down from heaven against the tower of Babel, and in the twelfth, of his call of Abraham. And thus Stephen, when giving the history of God's dealings in his various dispensations up to his own time, commences with that fact—"The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham;" Acts vii, 2. His going forth was to "hire laborers into his own vineyard." And the selection of the

family of Abraham was with the view of providing himself a people, who would bring him glory by their obedience, in the eyes of the nations.

The agreement which he makes with the laborers is next offered to our notice. This answers to the covenant at Sinai, which is so often referred to, both in the Old Testament and the New: Heb. viii, 9; Deut. v, 2. The terms of the agreement were, "a denarius for the day." To this I judge, the millenium corresponds, "the days of heaven upon earth," when the land was to be possessed in its full fruitfulness and beauty, in length of life and abundant joy by the obedient Jew: Deut. xi, 18—21. It is also set forth in another and agreeing view as the "rest" of God. The day is the time of labor: the time of glory is the period of rest.

But what is "*the day*?" It is "the present age," (*αιων ουτος*;) which, commencing from the flood, will not cease before the second coming of the Lord Jesus. It is a certain definite space of time, marked by the definite article, and hence wrongly translated, "*a day*;" for the transaction embraces the space of one day only. The Jews reckoned the natural day to begin at six in the evening of the former day. Hence the time from the creation to the flood answers to the faint light of the early evening, which speedily wanes into the darkness of night. But after the flood a new era began, which taking its rise from the call of Abraham, ends at the giving of reward by the Lord Jesus at his coming. "In the *age to come* eternal life," says St. Mark (x, 30;) so that "this age" is the day, as "that age" is the time of reward. This day is called in Scripture by several names. It is commonly entitled "this age:" Luke xvi, 8; xx, 34, 35. It is also named "man's day:" 1 Cor. iv, 3, (margin;) "the evil day:" Eph. vi, 13; v, 16. It is the day of taking Israel by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, and of the covenant that followed: Heb. viii, 9. The day of Israel's rebellion and hardness: Rom. x, 21; xi, 8. And of the sleep of the righteous in the sepulchre: Acts ii, 29. As then "the day" answers to "this age," so are the disciples curious

to know the signs of its conclusion, and Jesus is particular in describing what takes place at the end of it: Matt. xiii, 39—43, 49; xxiv, 3. The *work* of the kingdom begins with the calling of the Jew: the rest of the kingdom with Christ's coming.

The persons with whom the agreement is made are called "*the workers*," (*οἱ ἐργατοὶ*.) This, of course, is the fittest possible designation of Israel under the covenant of works. And they are the only parties that are specially so called. "To him that *worketh* is the reward not reckoned of grace, *but of debt*," is the description given by Paul of one under the law. Work and the law are inseparable: Rom. iii, 20, 27, 28; ix, 32. These are the parties also that *boast* of what they have done (ver. 12,) and that is characteristic of the law, but impossible under the Gospel. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith:" Rom. iii, 27.

The householder's next step after making the agreement, is to send them into his vineyard. They are hired in one spot, they are sent to labor in another. Even thus the people of Israel entered into covenant with God at Sinai, but were sent by the Most High into the land of Canaan. "Therefore, now go, lead the people into the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold! mine angel shall go before thee." "And the Lord said unto Moses, Depart and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swore unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob:" Ex. xxxi, 34; xxxiii, 1. The vineyard seems to answer to the promised land: for during the ministration of the letter, the service of God and the kingdom of God were identified with the land of Israel.

II. We enter now upon the second hiring, and the second division. The householder goes forth again at the third hour of the day, answering to our nine o'clock. This was with the ancients the time of full market, when the number of buyers and sellers was the greatest. Now if the day be the time mentioned above, then, since there are about two thousand years from the call of Abraham to the

birth of Jesus,¹ and there will probably be two thousand before he comes again (upwards of eighteen hundred having already past,) the length of the day supposed in the parable will be four thousand years: and the four principal divisions of it will consist of a thousand years each. The third hour therefore or nine o'clock, will bring us to about one thousand years before Christ: that is, to the time of Solomon. Answerably, then, to that being the period of full market, we know that the reign of Solomon was a time of peace, when the world thrived, and the population of Judea was almost numberless. "Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and making merry:" 1 Kings iv.

The householder having gone forth at the third hour, saw others standing idle. As the second party are called "others," and all the Jews are included in the first party, these are Gentiles. And they are Gentiles near to the vineyard or near to the householder's abode: for as soon as he is gone forth, he sees them. And thus the Gentiles called in Solomon's day, were those that lay near to the land of Canaan; Judæa and Jerusalem being often described as lying in the midst of the nations. "This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the *midst of the nations and countries round about her*:" Ez. v, 5; so Deut. vi, 14; xiii, 7; xvii, 14. The second party of laborers he sees in the market-place. This supposes a *city*; and the world is the city in question. The market-place is usually the central spot of a city: and by the market-place we are to understand, as I believe, the parts adjacent to Judæa. In this region have lain the great empires of the world, the centres of commerce and dominion. In the market-place sat the *rulers*: (Acts xvi, 19;) there were the cares of this age, buying and selling; thither went those who desired to be "seen of men:" Matt. xxiii, 5, 7. And, accordingly, those that are God's people are "chosen out of the world"

¹ See *Greswell's Dissertations on the Gospels*, vol. iv.

as these from the market-place. These persons addressed by the householder, however, are not those who were busy with their wares: for such being taken up with the deceitfulness of riches or the cares of life, are not ready to listen to the invitation of God. The laborers whom he addresses, were "standing *idle*." In this respect they are contrasted with the first party, who are known only as the diligent or "workers." Now, standing is usually the posture of diligence or active labor: (Heb. x, 11;) but here the mark of idleness is attached to it. Had they been described as *sitting*, it would have betokened *rest*. But rest belongs not to the ungodly. Their heathen worship of idols was a disquieting themselves in vain; and all their deeds were, in God's sight, idleness. The true employment is the adding to faith—virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. "For (saith the Apostle) if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be *idle* (margin) nor unfruitful:" 2 Peter i, 8. But none of these graces were to be found among Gentiles lying in their darkness, and therefore were they "standing idle." On seeing them, he bids them also to go into the vineyard, with a general promise of receiving what was just. The fame of Solomon's wisdom, piety, magnificence, and power, in consequence of his devotion to Jehovah, was the "fame" or "report of faith" (Rom. x, 16, 17,) by which God attracted not a few to himself: Deut. iv, 6—8. "And there came of *all people* to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom:" 1 Kings iv, 34. An illustrious example is the Queen of the South, of whom our Lord speaks as a specimen of the call of the Gentiles: Matt. xii, 42. "And when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions:" 1 Kings x, 1. The call of the Gentiles in Solomon's day required a personal visitation of the land of Israel. "And all the earth sought to Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart. And they brought every man his present:" 1 King x, 24, 25. With the Gentiles who believed

in this day, no formal covenant was entered into, they trusted the justice and generosity of the householder for their reward. The second class of laborers we occasionally meet with in the New Testament, as the devout, or proselytes, or fearers of God. "And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas: and of the *devout Greeks*, a great multitude:" Acts xvii, 4; so Acts x, 2, 7, 35; xvii, 17; xviii, 7.

Their obedience to the call is noticed. "They went their way." They left their homes to travel to Palestine, the centre whence God spoke in mercy to his chosen, both of the Jew and of the Gentile. The result as it regards the first class is not stated. Else Israel's unbelief must have been noted. And we find Solomon in his prayer at the dedication solemnly recognizing *the stranger* as coming for God's name's sake: And to such he prayed God to incline his ear: 1 Kings viii, 41—43.

III. The third division now presents itself. And it is remarkable, as wanting those points of detail which distinguish the others. It is introduced by the word "Again." The work, therefore, on this occasion was the *repetition* of a former one. The parties called were Jews and Gentiles, who had been addressed *before*. We are considering now the call of the church of God. It began to be addressed at the sixth hour, or about two thousand years from the call of Abraham, when Jesus took flesh, and having tabernacled with men, sent forth his apostles, to proclaim remission of sins in his name. In the present division but one going forth of God is mentioned, though there are two *calls*; one at the sixth, and the other at the ninth hour. The ninth hour would answer to a thousand years after Christ; about which time we find bodies of men raised up to serve God in the midst of the awful surrounding darkness of Popery—as the Waldenses, Albigenses, and Cathari.

In the third going forth of the householder, he alone is exhibited as the agent. For in the calling of the church the *power of the flesh* is not recognized, as it was in the covenant entered into by the first class. Nor are the sons

of God now viewed separately as in themselves, but as members of Christ. All mention of the *persons* called, is therefore, omitted. They are not described as working or idle, for the Gospel sets Jew and Gentile on a level as sinners. The glory of the church dispensation is its manifesting the presence and acts of God. *But one* going forth is specified, though the callings are two. Even so the second work of God is enveloped in mystery and darkness, compared with the first. No mention is made of any *place* to which the householder went, for the church dispensation is not fixed to any place as its centre, but gathers its members out of every land. No notice is taken of the vineyard: for the service of God is no longer confined to Jerusalem, or Judæa. No promise, or command is uttered by the householder: for those called now, are not servants but sons, not under law, but under grace. And I believe that the meaning of the passage is seen even in the connecting particles. The first and second hirings are strongly related to each other, and are coupled by the friendly particle, “and:” (καί.) The third stands disjoined from both, by having neither of the ordinary conjunctions. The fourth is disjoined from the third by the partly opposing, partly connecting particle—“but:” (δὲ.)

An appeal to justice characterizes the second and fourth divisions. “Whatever is *just*, (δικαίον,) I will give you.” But there is no trace of it in the present call: for God’s dealings with the church are *grace* only. Yet does not the point of the parable turn on grace to the church; for that would be less startling both to Jew and Gentile than the present result. But that justice should be specified as the standard of reward, and yet that grace should actually distribute it, this is less expected. The recognition of justice is a hint that Jews are employed, for Jewish terms are introduced. For the Jew is the great witness of the *justice* of God, as the church of God is of his *mercy*.

Agreement, duration, price, and the place of work are characteristic of the first. Agreement with God manifests

confidence in the flesh; and Paul testifies that even in his day they sought righteousness “not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law:” Rom. ix, 32. Thus the first and third orders of laborers are contrasted; but the second and fourth most closely resemble each other.

Though there are two calls in the third division, yet the third and fourth are treated as but one body. They have not any relation to the first, like the second and fifth. There is no notice of the householder’s seeing “others;” nor does he say, “Go *ye also*.” The omission then of these particulars, shows them to be that neutral body, the church; which has no connexion with place, or the flesh.

IV. We come now to the fourth division of the parable, which contains the call of the fourth order of laborers: for as the fourth call at the ninth hour did not originate any *new* class, it is only regarded as a part of the former work.

The hour at which these are called is remarkable. At about the eleventh hour, or five o’clock, the householder went forth, when it wanted but an hour to the close of the day, or even a *less* time; for the laborers were, by the law, to be paid before sunset.

The description of the engagement of these is the most detailed of any. On his going forth the householder “*found* others.” We read nothing of his finding the first. They were well known to him even before their engagement, as the seed of Abraham, his friend. And they are described absolutely as “the workers.” The rest are mentioned, only as related to these—he saw, or “*found others*.” The second class he *saw* in the market-place, marking nearness to his abode. These he *finds*—denoting distance, or search. And hence we have no note of *place*; for the last are gathered from a distance.

Those found upon the present occasion are some not included in any of the former classes. They are “others,” but like the second class, “standing idle.”

These must be *Gentiles*; first, because they do not seek the householder, but he seeks and finds them: and this is characteristic of Gentiles, as saith the Apostle—“*I was*

found of them that sought me not : I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me." They are Gentiles, as we see by the second quotation in the same place—"First Moses saith, *I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you :*" Rom. x, 19, 20. Now it is the last class of whom the first are so jealous. And as the first who are provoked to jealousy are Jews, these must be Gentiles.

On finding them the householder rebukes them. "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" Their reply is—"Because no man hath hired us." From this brief dialogue many consequences may be drawn—First, it was to be expected, as is implied in the rebuke of the master, that the church would have done its duty in preaching the Gospel throughout the world, at so late a period in the dispensation. But we have here, not the church converting the world, but its proper work of evangelizing left undone even at the close of the dispensation. Next we learn, that the last class is gathered in from nations wholly heathen, as distinguished from professedly Christian nations. There is allusion to past sin, and yet a reception into mercy. Their being unhired before, especially in connexion with the close of the day, is characteristic of the class. The form of the rebuke is well worthy of notice. "Why *stand ye here?*" *Standing here*, marks the portion and attitude of the worldly. Of Christ, our Great Head, it is written—"He is not *here*, he is *risen*." Nor is the Christian's position the imperfect one of standing—He is "*made to sit in heavenly places* in Christ Jesus : " Eph. ii, 6. "*Here*" is not the Christian's place ; for "we have *here* no continuing city : " Heb. xiii, 14. But of the Christian's city it is written—"There shall be no night *there* : " Rev. xxi, 25, xxii, 25.

Persons are now specified again ; and condition, command, and promise come in afresh. These things denote a new work of God to commence after the calling of the church. This last class resembles very greatly the second : and we shall see the meaning of this hereafter. They are distinguished, however, by the rebuke, which was not

received by the second order. We can readily account for the difference. In Solomon's day God was speaking to man on earth, by the things of the earth ; but now, ever since his Son has ascended on high, he has no longer his place here. To "mind earthly things," or to be "standing here" were no rebuke in the days of Solomon, while it is condemnation now : Phil. iii, 19. Thus we may see that the church, or the Christian's heavenly calling has come in between that day and the one in question, and therefore it is proved by an additional argument, that the third and fourth calls relate to that body. The vineyard also appears again ; whence I gather, that this last class has some special connexion with the land of Judæa, though what that connexion is, unless it be a partial keeping of the feasts at Jerusalem, I am unable to say : Isaiah lii.

We have an intimation of a second work of God among the Gentiles, in the speech of James in the council at Jerusalem. "Simon (Peter) hath declared how *first* God visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name : " Acts xv, 14. His *first* visitation then implies a *second*, which I am persuaded is given us here. And in the apostle's speech, and in the words which are quoted afterwards, two classes of the Gentiles are recognized. We have the Gentiles who are nominally the people of God—"the Gentiles upon whom my name is called." Beside these there are "*the residue of men*." James foresaw by the Spirit, that a dispensation was commencing, under which David's tabernacle would be in ruins, and Gentiles would be the professing people of God, during the blindness of the Jew. Yet these professing nations would be but a part of the Gentiles, and there would be still heathen. "To this agree the words of the prophets ; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down ; and I will build again the ruins thereof and will set it up, that *the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called*, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things : " Acts xv, 15—17.

Those called on the fifth occasion therefore are “the residue of men”—heathen nations, unvisited as yet with the light of God’s truth. The body elected therein is, I judge, “the *fulness* of the Gentiles,” after whose coming in “all Israel is to be saved.” They are, I believe, called, at that great preaching of “the gospel of the kingdom for a witness unto all the Gentiles,” which the Saviour predicts as the great sign before *the end* comes: Matt. xxiv, 14. This critically accords with the parable; as their call is but an hour before *the end* of the day, and a less time before the reward. They will be called, as I apprehend, *by Jewish preachers*. For first, “the gospel of *the kingdom*” is the Jewish aspect of the gospel, occurring only in St. Matthew, (iv, 23; ix, 35)—“the gospel of the circumcision” as distinguished from the gospel committed to Paul, which was “the gospel of *the grace of God*”: Acts xx, 24. This last order is gathered in, as I believe, by the great “army of the preachers” (εὐαγγελίζομενοι LXX, Psalm lxviii, 11,) who go forth possessed of the power of miracle and prophecy to the nations: Acts ii, 17, in fulfilment of the word—“A light of the Gentiles that thou shouldst be for salvation unto *the ends of the earth*”: Acts xiii, 47. These are the men of understanding among the people that “*instruct many*,” and that “turn *the many* to righteousness:” (הרבים Dan. xi, 33; xii, 3,) at the time of Antichrist and the Great Tribulation, and (according to the passage from Joel) before the signs in the sun and moon. Again, in Isaiah xl, we have a voice of testimony to all flesh—“The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and *all flesh* shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. The voice said, Cry. And he said, what shall I cry? *All flesh* is grass.” And the bearers of these tidings are Zion and Jerusalem, proving that the testimony is Jewish, (3—9,) while an especial branch of it appeals to the “cities of Judah.”

Again, when Paul is discussing the subject of salvation through the report of faith *to the Gentiles*, he quotes, in proof of the necessity of the mission of preachers by God, a Jewish prophecy:—“Whosoever shall call upon the

name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things:” Rom. x, 13—15. As this is quoted from the law, it is said to them that are under the law, and refers, I infer, to the general mission of Jewish believers in Jesus in fulfilment of the word—“Go ye therefore, teach *all the Gentiles*.” The missionary work noticed by Isaiah takes place while Jerusalem is still a captive, and before the Lord makes bare his holy arm in the sight of all the Gentiles, and all the ends of the earth see the salvation of God: Isaiah lii, 1—10.

And this is probably the reason of the extreme resemblance between the second and fourth classes. It will be “the gospel of *the kingdom*”—a similar testimony to that which, in the day of Solomon, brought in an election from the Gentiles. But the last is more honored than the second class; for they believe in the kingdom before it is manifested: though others believed in it when its earthly likeness was already exhibited before the eyes of men.

But an objection may be made to this view of the fourth call, if regarded as a distinct and extraordinary work of God not yet begun. And as it is right not to evade an objection, I will state it. It may be said—‘If your scheme were correct, the work must have begun already. For, as the three hours, or the quarter of a day answer to a thousand years, so do 333 years correspond with one hour of it. The last call of God to the Gentiles then should have commenced before the year 1700: and therefore you are either wrong as to your time, or else the missionary labors of the present day are a fulfilment of it.’ To this I can only at present reply—that the time is *not to be taken strictly to the year*, as the words of the parable show: for

wherever the hour is mentioned, it is with the qualifying word "*about*." And it is worthy of observation (since this is a question of *order*) that the place of the words of narration are in one point changed on the last occasion. In the other instances, the going forth of the householder is spoken of *before the mention of the hour*; but here *the hour is named before the going forth of the householder*. From this I am apt to infer, that God's final work will be *after* the exact point of the hour has more or less passed by.

5. The four first divisions having given us the hiring, we now are brought to the concluding part, the order of payment. The recompensing of laborers begin "when even is come." The evening is marked by the place of the sun when now near its setting: and the law required, that the laborer should be paid before sunset: Deut. xxiv, 15. The evening answers to the "time of the end," and the setting of the sun is the end. But the sun is here taken, not as the organ of *light*, but as the cause of *oppression* and *heat*: and thus represents Antichrist in his power of persecution: Matt. xiii, 6.

The steward, to whom is issued the direction to call and pay the laborers, is our Lord Jesus Christ: Heb. iii, 2—6. He it is to whom the bestowal of reward is assigned of God: Rev. xxii, 12. He appears on this occasion as well as in the gathering in of the harvest (Rev. xiv) in the place of the servant, as being the Son of *Man*. He is directed when to summon the laborers; for "times and seasons the Father hath put in his own power:" Acts i, 7.

It is graciously taken for granted in the command to pay them all their wages, that none had been idle in the vineyard, or, had forfeited in any way their hire. This God is willing to assume: and yet under even this supposition, his justice in what follows, is unimpeachable. There is no question entered into as to individual labor, or the work of one exceeding that of another; for they are *treated as classes, not as individuals*. It is assumed that they are equal during the time of their work.

But the order of payment is different from that which might have been expected—beginning from the last unto the first.

The great point to be observed in understanding the parable is the order—first of the *hiring*, and afterwards of the *payment*. Hence, those have gone widely astray from its meaning, who have taken the words "first" and "last" as expressive of degrees of *privilege*, instead of the order of the successive calls.

From what has preceded we are, I believe, authorized to assert that any prophetic system must be wrong, which does not provide for the union of these four (or, if you will, these five) orders in the kingdom of heaven. They are, if we have traced them rightly, (1.) The Jews. (2.) The devout Gentiles, (συνβομενοι or ευσεβεις.) (3.) The Church. (4.) The elect believers in Jesus of the heathen.

We have then to trace from other sources the order of reward here indicated. It is what mathematicians call *inverse*. The class who were hired last are rewarded first: the class first hired are rewarded last. Now, in order to obtain a view of the succession of reward, we must turn to the book of Revelation. Those first rewarded there will answer to the fourth class here, provided they be a class recognized in the parable.

The party that first enters on its reward in the Apocalypse, is the child that is "caught up to God and his throne:" Rev. xii, 5. That child, like the fifth class of laborers, is peculiarly privileged. The fifth class are no sooner sent into the vineyard, than, as it were, their work is over, and they receive their reward. The child is, in like manner, no sooner born, than it is caught up to the throne of God. The last order of laborers escapes, not only the burden of the day, but its oppressive heat. The child escapes the persecution of the Dragon, and the oppression of the great tribulation. For when it is carried to the throne of God, Satan is not yet cast down to earth, and therefore, the word is not uttered which marks Satan's casting down and the commencement of the great tribulation. As referred to the series of the trum-

pets its ascent takes place some time before the *fifth* trumpet.¹

But as this is a point of much importance, let us adduce more evidence that the characteristics of the man-child agree with those of the fifth order of laborers. And in order to this, I will first offer proof that by the woman, its mother, is meant Jerusalem the earthly. She is seen surrounded with the three kinds of *celestial glory*; of the sun, moon, and stars. And herein she stands contrasted with Babylon, which is adorned with all *earthly glory*; purple, and scarlet, precious stones, and pearls, and gold.

By the twelve stars are meant the twelve patriarchs: "And he (Joseph) dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brethren, and said, Behold I have dreamed a dream more: and behold the sun, and moon, and *eleven stars* made obeisance to me:" Gen. xxxvii, 9. Joseph of course is the *twelfth* star.

Again, the sun and moon are spoken of as belonging to Jerusalem. "They shall call thee The City of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel." "*Thy sun* shall no more go down, neither shall *thy moon* withdraw itself:" Isaiah lx, 14, 20. How strong and appropriating the expressions, "*thy sun*," "*thy moon*!" Her clothing with the sun denotes the irradiation of Jerusalem with the presence and glory of Jehovah Jesus, "*the Sun of Righteousness*:" Mal. iv; Psalm lxxxiv, 11. "The Lord shall be unto thee *an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory*." "The Lord shall be *thine everlasting light*:" verses 19, 20. "Jerusalem shall dwell safely, and this is the name whereby she shall be called, *The Lord our Righteousness*:" Jer. xxxiii, 16. Hence the clothing with the Savior's glory. And again—"The name of the *city* from that day shall be, '*The Lord is There!*'" Ezekiel xlviii, 35.

¹ The proof of the correspondene of the two series at this point, is derived from a comparison of Chron. xii, 4, with ix, 12; of xii, 12, with ix, 13; and of xii, 9, with ix, 1. (πεπτωκοτα.)

By the moon is intended, as I judge, the glory of the law; which is to that of the Gospel, as the lesser light to the greater. And as the moon's light is borrowed from the sun, so is the glory of the law borrowed from the glory of the Gospel. The moon's is not a constant light, that of the sun is. And thus while Moses had a glory, so that "the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the glory of his countenance," yet that "glory was to be done away." And as in the presence of the sun, the moon has no glory, so "*even that which was made glorious* (the law) *had no glory* in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth:" (the gospel) 2 Cor. iii, 7, 10.

Also, in the prophecy on Olivet, the sun, moon, and stars, are introduced in connection with Jerusalem, sympathizing, as it were, with her time of trouble. "*Jerusalem* shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the *sun, and in the moon, and in the stars*:" Luke xxi, 24, 25.

As then Jerusalem is represented as adorned with this threefold glory of heaven; so has that city been glorified, in *each of the three dispensations since the flood*. In the patriarchial it is honored as the capital of Melchizedec: Gen. xiv. 18. Under the Law it was glorified, as the city to which the tribes went up thrice a year, where the temple of the Lord was placed, and his king reigned. And under the Gospel it was glorified anew, as the place of the descent of the Holy Ghost, the spot whence first the light of the Gospel of Christ broke forth, and the seat of the metropolitan Church of Christ.

And now, as I judge, it is represented as the city which is to be glorified by the three orders of celestial glory in the time of the kingdom of God; the point at which heaven meets earth.

That the woman is not the *heavenly Jerusalem* is clear; for the one before us travails and bears a son, but the heavenly Jerusalem does not bear: Gal. iv, 26, 27. But into this I must not enter further now.

Who then is the child? First, it is *no Jewish* body:

for the place of the earthly people is not "the throne of God," to which the child is caught up. And as this is the first rewarded in the Apocalypse, the man-child answers to those first rewarded in the Parable of the Laborers; and as the one is Gentile, so is the other.

The *father* of the mystic child is, as I believe, the body of Jewish preachers sent forth among the nations. And thus saith the Scripture—"Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by *the word of God*:" 1 Peter i, 23. And again—"Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many *fathers*: for in Christ Jesus I have *begotten you through the Gospel*:" 1 Cor. iv, 15.

And Jerusalem is the *mother*, because, from this as a centre the latter day testimony goes forth; and because, as I am inclined to believe, the believers so raised up will have a peculiar reference to Jerusalem. And this corresponds with what was noticed above, that after silence concerning the vineyard during the two former calls, it appears again at the close.

The only body that can compare with the child of the woman in heaven as probably answering to the fifth class, is "the great multitude:" Rev. vii. But these are rewarded later than the man-child; for they "*come out of the great tribulation*:" (14;) but the child ascends before it begins. And the great multitude have to endure, as it appears, *especial persecution*, and receive in consequence especial reward. They are not noticed therefore in the parable of the laborers, as being a peculiar portion of the Church of Christ, without any new or especial call of God. The great multitude are rewarded after the sixth seal: and if the scene of terror there represented, be the same as the terror at the close of the sixth trumpet, (Rev. xi, 12, 13,) which I believe, they are rewarded at or during the *sixth* trumpet. And as peculiarly troubled they cannot be those who escape both the labor and oppressive heat. The next rewarded are the members of the Church of Christ. They are gathered up to their glory at the 7th trumpet, when Christ descends into air: 1 Thess.

iv, 15—17; 1 Cor. xv, 52. The saints are on earth after the catching up not only of the child, but of the great multitude: Rev. viii, 3, 4; xiii, 7—10; xiv, 12. The church is to be rewarded at the presence (or coming) and epiphany (or manifestation) of Jesus Christ, and not before. It is characteristic of the church to love the manifestation (or epiphany) of Jesus: 2 Tim. iv, 8. Till then it is to fight the good fight of faith and keep the commands: 1 Tim. vi, 14. The saving grace of God teaches us that, while we live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, we are to look for the manifestation of the glory of our God and Savior as our proper and blessed hope: Tit. ii, 12, 13.

It is also called the time of the Savior's "presence," or "coming." Our gathering together to him is at the time of his presence: 2 Thess. ii, 1. Nor will the Savior receive his church till the presence of the Man of Sin, and his Satanic power is displayed. Hence the Child cannot be the church; for that has ascended before Satan calls up the wild beast from the bottomless pit. The Savior's presence is the time of the presentation of the saints in the air: 1 Cor. xv. 23; 1 Thess. iv, 16, 17; ii, 19; 1 John ii, 28. From the second of these passages we learn that some of the saints will be alive, others asleep at the presence of the Lord; but both classes will be borne into the air together. The saints will then either be found blameless, or rebuked: 1 Thess. v, 23. Until this time the church is to be patient: James v, 6—8. It is to be waiting for the revelation of the Lord Jesus: 1 Cor. i, 5—8. At that time rest is to be brought to the troubled: 2 Thess. i, 4—10. Then, even at the revelation of the Lord Jesus, grace is to be brought to his church: 2 Peter i, 3—13. Also, some believers in Christ, whether those of the Jewish disciple-class, or the church strictly so called, will be found on earth up to the end of the age: Matt. xxviii, 20. Lastly, of the church it is written—"I will *come again* and receive you unto myself:" John xiv, 3.

The harvest of Rev. xiv, is, as I apprehend, the ingathering of the Church of Christ, at the end of the age.

Matt. xiii, 39. It is the last event of the series, except the vintage, which is followed by the feast of tabernacles, and that feast answers to the thousand years of blessedness. At the catching up of the Child, and during the especial reward of the great multitude, Jesus appears in heaven as *the Lamb* on the *throne*; but at the harvest he comes on the *cloud* as the *Son of Man*.¹ Of course therefore, the two former events precede the latter.

And the harvest comprehends, as I believe, the giving of reward to both the parties called on the third occasion, viz.—at the sixth and ninth hours. Those rewarded in the *third place* are the devout of the Gentiles, who are not believers in Jesus. And these, I apprehend, are included, together with the Jews, under the title of “*fearers of thy name*, small and great:” Rev. xi, 18; xix, 5. For such is the description given of the devout, both of the Jew under the law, and of the Gentile not under it: Gen. xlii, 18; Exodus xviii, 21; Job i, 1, 8; ii, 3; Eccl. vii, 18; Psalm lxvi, 16. And “small and great” are distinctions unknown among believers; but familiar to nature and the law. These are rewarded in the parable of the sheep and goats; whereon the writer may have something more to say, if the Lord permit, at another time. This class is raised up anew by the preaching of the angel: Rev. xiv, 6, 7. Lastly, the Jew enters upon his reward. But on this, so far as I can perceive, the New Testament in general is silent, because it has already been largely treated of in the Jewish prophets.

These four classes must be found in every correct representation of the differences of standing in the kingdom of the Savior; the two first belonging to the *heavenly* department of it; the two latter, to the *earthly*. While the rest remains for the people of God in general, the elect of each dispensation take a different place therein; and in the

¹ The harvest cannot be judgment; for such as the first-fruits are, such is the harvest: Rom. xi. 16. But the first-fruits are some redeemed from among men, of a like character then is the harvest.

heavenly glory are differences; as the glories of the sun, the moon, the stars, are different one from the other.

The receipt of the denarius is specified of the first and last class alone; because on the especial contrast of these two turns the lesson of the whole parable. By the denarius, which all receive alike, is meant, I judge, the enjoyment of the period of millennial rest.¹ The reward will bear enstamped on it the image and superscription of Jesus, as the Lord of that kingdom, into which the righteous are privileged to enter. The reward is to be bestowed, as we learn from the immediate context, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of glory: Matt. xix, 28.

That the “first” and “last” are not so called because of differences of privilege, is plain; for the first complain of their priority as having exposed them to much suffering. Nor does individual merit at all come into question: but one class, as a class, murmurs against another class. It is not, “*I worked more than the rest*,”—but—“*These last have wrought but one hour; thou hast made them equal unto us*.”

The murmuring of the first is capable of being accounted for, on the supposition of their representing the Jew *in the flesh*. Jealousy is characteristic of the Jew. And this is the provoking of the Jew to jealousy by them that are no people, and the angering by a foolish nation, of which Moses had spoken as their just recompense for provoking God to anger by their idols. The result is brought about, as we see, by God’s taking others, called to be his later than themselves, to an equal, nay, to a loftier position in the kingdom of God than themselves—in that kingdom which they challenged as peculiarly, and of right, their own.

¹ This must, I suppose, be the signification of it from the employment of the term ζων αιωνιος in the former chapter, and its connection with the αιων in both Mark and Luke. Εν τω αιωνι τω ερχομενω ζων αιωνιον. Mark x, 29, 30; Luke xviii, 29, 30. Is there not in its ten asses a reference to the *ten* ages of the millennium?

The same anger was displayed by the Jew before, when Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth preached the lesson of God's sovereignty in setting the Gentile above the Jew, in the days of Elijah and Elisha.

The Jew appears again full of jealousy in the parable of the prodigal son. As the correct and boastful elder brother he is jealous of what the father has done for his fallen younger brother, and is not to be reconciled with his father's dealings by any persuasion or argument whatever.

Remark also the fierce jealousy which breaks forth at Jerusalem when Paul, making his defence to the Israelites, mentions that Jesus determined to send him afar to the Gentiles—"And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live:" Acts xxii, 21, 22. The first order of laborers complain of the equality of the others. Had the other classes been treated according to the same principle of strict justice as themselves, they would have enjoyed three quarters, a half, a quarter, or a twelfth of the time of millennial blessedness. But the householder will cause all alike to enjoy its full duration. Thus in the *time* of glory to be enjoyed all will be equal: though not in their places and dignities during that time.

The first complain of "the burden of the day," for the law's yoke was heavy: Acts xv, 10, 28. They complain separately of "the heat." This refers to the persecution of the Gentiles and especially of Antichrist: Matt. xiii, 6, 11. It occurs last, and so is fitly the last point insisted on. Pharaoh was the morning sun; and Antichrist the evening. The favored ones of the eleventh hour escape both these: and therefore are the most likely to excite enmity and murmuring.

VI. But the householder, having laid down his plan abides by it, and justifies it. He shows the murmurers that they had no ground for complaint: for complaint can only rightly be raised against injustice; but no injustice was done to them. He recalls to their remembrance the covenant made. He will display both justice and gene-

rosity: justice—in exact execution of his agreement; and generosity—in going beyond the expectations of those who trusted him. The covenant was made, and it shall stand.

The mercy designed for the others shall take its full effect. This is like the statement which Paul gives of the extent of the ministry of Jesus Christ—"Now, I say, that Jesus Christ was a minister of the *circumcision, for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles should glorify God for his mercy:*" Rom. xv, 8, 9. The principle of the law is justice: and therefore the Jew is made a witness of God's justice; but the Gentile, of God's mercy, which is the loftier attribute, and has the wider and more glorious exhibition. And Paul teaches that the principles of justice and mercy are to be kept separate: Rom. xi, 6.

The murmurer had thrown down his coin in disgust; he is bid to take it up and *depart*.¹ The others then have a place nearer to God and his Son, than the first.

The householder re-affirms his former decision.—"I am determined to give to these last even as unto thee." It may be noticed that the last body are exactly those against whom, especially, the Jew would feel most provoked. He would not be so angry with the second class: for they are Gentiles in the flesh, over whom he will exercise dominion. Nor would he feel so much anger against the elect of professedly Christian nations. For a certain place of happiness is conceded to the good among the Gentiles by the Jewish doctors. But that any from the idolatrous heathen should in the very last days be chosen, and in every respect take precedence of themselves, is most galling to him. But vain is murmuring. One great design of God's dealings with man is, "that the purpose of God according to election might stand:" Rom. ix, 11, 16.

¹ But the Gentiles have no room to boast. As the Jew's envy at the Gentile produces this outbreak, so does, I believe, the Gentile's envy at the superiority of the Jew, produce the grand rebellion at the close of the millennium.

As the householder had defended himself against any imputation of injustice, as regarded the murmurers, so does he show that there was no injustice absolutely to any. The whole was but a doing as he would with his own. Could any find fault with that? And, finally, he traces the accusation to the secret spring of envy in the human heart at a bounty of which it is not called to partake.

VII. We have now come to the conclusion, in which the Savior presents anew the saying with which he began the parable. It contains the great lesson of the whole. The parable took its rise from the feelings produced in Peter's mind on beholding the rich young man, when required by our Lord to surrender all he had, going away sorrowful and unwilling to comply. The failure drew forth the self-complacency of Peter, in the thought how differently himself and his fellow apostles had acted under like circumstances, and, he inquires, what therefore should be their reward? The Savior frankly answers, by assuring him, that their recompense should be nothing less than a throne; while he adds that the same principle proportionately, should take effect with all those who made surrender of anything for his cause.

But because this feeling was earthly, and likely to tend to a boastful and envious state of mind in the result, (as represented in the conduct of those first hired in the parable,) the Savior proceeds to check the emotion, by the history which follows.

Peter's question went upon the supposition, that glory in the kingdom would be measured exactly by the merits of men. But Jesus, in the words that both precede and follow the parable, gives us to understand, that *not the merits of men, but the call and sovereignty of God will be the great characterizing principle of the kingdom*: for which, therefore, it becomes us to be prepared. He shows us that those who might have expected most did not receive it, and that those who could have expected least, received in fact the most. "So the last shall be first, and the first last, for many are called but few chosen." The lesson takes a wider range, when viewed as bearing on the

whole of Israel, for it teaches them, that they, though they were first called of God, would yet be the last rewarded; and receive at length only just so much as their covenant guaranteed: while to the Gentiles the riches of God's mercy would be poured forth. The words have likewise a secondary application as it regards the Gentiles also. There are from among *these* three elections; and the *last* of these is *first* rewarded, so that as it respects *them likewise* the last are first.

Some have been unable to discover, why it is added, "for many are called, but few are chosen," for there seems to be no rejection of any, and all that are called appear to have come. But in order to appreciate the words, we must look upon each class of the laborers, *as the elect of its dispensation*. *Not all the persons in the marketplace, not all the laborers in the city are hired*. Nay, not even all of the first class enter into the kingdom; for many of the children of the kingdom are cast into outer darkness, amidst weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The three great points of the parable at the close are—

1. The inversion of the order of payment. The natural order would have been, that the first hired should be the first paid. But the change made, while it displays the sovereignty of the householder, excites the covetous expectations of the first, and gives occasion for the murmuring which follows.

2. The equalizing the pay of the labourers is another disappointment of expectation. It is determined on with the same view as the former point, to assert the right of the householder to dispose of his own property at his will, provided he wronged none.

3. The election of the *times* of calling, and of the *persons* called, is another of the great points on which stress is to be laid.

The present age is to be the sphere of sovereignty, and that sovereignty is to find its exercise, in the persons called, the times of their call and of their reward, and the extent of their recompense.

And this I judge gives us the reason why the latter

clause of the lesson is joined to its former part by the word, "for." "The last shall be first, for many are called, but few are chosen." That is, since the saved are saved of pure grace, and are an election out of the multitudes that perish, therefore sovereignty shall have its further exercise in appointing the order of reward. *Were it a question of human merit, justice should regulate the whole; but as it is of mere grace that any enter the kingdom, grace shall assign different places and times of reward even to the elect themselves.*

"The last first," was the lesson of God's sovereignty in the history of Esau and Jacob. The last first, is the lesson derived from the lives of Ishmael and Isaac. Similar instances we find in the children of Sarah and Rachel; the sons of Peninnah and Hannah. So was it with the first Adam and the last; the first, a "living soul;" the last, a "life-giving spirit."

To be among the elect at all, is mercy and glory; but *even among the elect themselves* sovereignty shall rule. And who can forbid? Who that sees the mercy of his own salvation, as saved by grace, would think of murmuring? "He hath saved us and *called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace:*" 2 Tim. i, 9.

Sovereignty would be manifested, as the Savior teaches, during the time of *mystery*, in the householder's *calling* whom he would to labour in his vineyard. His will was sufficient. Sovereignty will be exhibited still more openly in the time of *manifestation*, and at the period of reward. Now, if the *calling* of the Gentiles provoke the Jew, how much more the *rewarding* of them?

VIII. I would now add a few words on some erroneous views entertained concerning the parable. Not a few interpret the different hirings of the effectual calling of *individuals* by the grace of God, in the different *stages of life*. But this interpretation is destroyed—

1st. By perceiving that, throughout, the parable deals with *classes*, not with *individuals*.

2nd. The day is vastly longer than any individual's

life; for it has been shown that it answers to "this age," and that beginning with the call of Abraham, it ends with the Savior's return. *Individuals* then cannot, while *classes* may last during this long period.

3rd. There are no differing terms of salvation for those called in the various stages of life. But in the series of hiring we have as different terms presented as the law and the gospel.

4th. How faultily is "the eleventh hour," applied to those brought in to faith in Christ upon a death-bed! How can such labor in the vineyard of God, at life's last gasp.

5th. In the reward of the saints of the Church of Christ there will not be the differences *in time* supposed here.

6th. Nor, if the day be life, are the saints rewarded at death, but at the resurrection.

IX. Allied to this is the thought, that the parable is intended to prove that there will be no differences of reward in the coming glory. Such an opinion must be false, for it is contradicted by so many clear passages: Matt. v, 12; x, 41, 42; 2 John, 8, &c. This we might have said at first, ere we could explain the parable. But after the interpretation given, we may see the erroneousness of it. The parable deals with *classes*, not with *individuals*. Peter states the case not as his own individually, "Behold *we* have left all." This disposes of the present mistake, no less than of the former. For the two errors hang together. If the hours signify times of life, then the parties rewarded are individuals, and the equality of the pay infers an equality of reward. But if it be a dealing with classes, and the pay be the millennial bliss, then is the doctrine of the reward of each according as his work shall be (Rom. ii, 6; 1 Cor. iii, 13; 2 Cor. xi, 15; 1 Pet. i, 17; Rev. xxii, 12,) perfectly safe. The individual reward is not noticed here, for this gives only the place of the great *bodies of the elect* gathered out of God's various dispensations since the flood. But such a view by no means interferes with the question—Whether there will not be an arrangement of

individuals, *within those classes themselves*, according to their works? And as other passages of scripture clearly assert the doctrine of peculiar reward according to individual exertion, those passages are to be believed as containing truth perfectly in harmony with the parable.

Had the equalization of reward been intended as the great lesson of the parable, we should have read at its commencement—not “*many* that are first, shall be last,” but “*all*.”

Nay, the very preceding words of the Savior overthrow the idea. The apostles in consideration of peculiar suffering have promised to them twelve peculiar thrones and authority over the twelve tribes of Israel.

Finally, no one is rewarded who did not work at all; nor is there any laborer without his reward. Nor are any called into the vineyard except to labor, nor do any enter it except the called. Those that boast of their work are fixed down to the exactness of the bond, and receive a rebuke. Those that are silent as to their merits enter, through grace, into the fulness of joy, and the overflowing of reward. Let us be steadfast therefore, ever abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

In conclusion I would apply the teaching of the parable to a question under debate at present—What is the time of *the reward of the church*?

Texts have been brought forward in a former page to show that it does not enter on its reward before the appearing of Christ Jesus, and his descent into the air at the seventh trump. But the parable throws yet further and confirmatory light upon the subject. And on its teaching we may reason as follows:

1. The Church of Christ must be found somewhere in the parable; both because it is called of God, as it is written—“Us whom he hath *called*, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles:” (Rom. ix, 24,) but also because it is heir and partaker of the kingdom. “That ye should walk worthy of God who hath called you unto his *kingdom* and glory:” 1 Thess. ii, 12; James ii, 5.

2. Now the church cannot answer to the fifth class of laborers. For they had been unhired to the close of the day. And this could not be true, (to take the lowest ground,) either of the *Jewish* members of Christ, or of the Gentile proselytes.

3. It follows therefore that the church cannot be regarded as having yet entered on its reward. For its time of recompence must be, not only after the *call*, but after the *labor and reward* of the fifth class. But even their *call* has not yet taken place. And their reward does not take effect till near the fifth trumpet.

The mistake lies, as I judge, in supposing that the Man-child (of Rev. xii,) which is *first* rewarded is the *church*. But by the order set forth in the present parable the reward of the church is *second*. It is rightly affirmed that some enter on their reward before the final power of Anti-Christ is developed; but wrongly affirmed, as I believe, that the church is that body. For we have proof that the saints are exposed to the power of Anti-Christ: Rev. xiii, 10; xiv, 12. It is wrong to assert that none enter on their recompence before the seventh trump; it is right to assert that the church as a body remains on earth till the descent of the Lord at the seventh trump.

The Lord grant us further light on these and other points of his most holy will! What has been written is commended to the research of the saints, and the blessing of their Great Head! To him be glory for ever! Amen.

ALL BELIEVERS

INTERESTED IN THE

PARABLE OF THE VIRGINS.

Third Edition.

PARABLE OF THE VIRGINS.

THAT the parable of the wise and foolish virgins has been misunderstood, the following pages are designed to show. And the misunderstanding is traceable to several assumptions, which have been silently made by commentators. These assumptions then, let us examine, before entering on the interpretation here given.

(a.) The main assumption, nearly universal among writers on this parable, is, that "*Sincere Christians are the wise virgins, and hypocrites the foolish ones.*" The wise virgins are those "who truly enjoy," the foolish, "those who *only profess* the purity and holiness of His (Christ's) religion."

1. From this assumption it immediately follows, that the writers seek to make differences, where Christ has made agreement; in order to distinguish fundamentally the foolish from the wise. Now the Saviour has stated that they were alike in *eight* points, and that they differ in *one* only.

They agree in (1) being virgins—(2) and going forth—(3) to meet the bridegroom—(4) In taking their lamps—(5) In falling asleep—(6) In sleeping till the cry—(7) In rising at the cry—(8) In trimming their lamps.

The one point of disagreement is, that some carried no oil in another vessel for future supply: for oil in their lamps for present use they all had.

All these points of identity are sought to be depressed, or contradicted, in order that they may wear an

unfavourable aspect towards the foolish virgins. But taken simply, and as the Saviour has stated the matter, the whole bears quite another appearance. All that is alleged against them, is simple foolishness, or want of foresight of what was expedient towards the securing the desired admission to the wedding feast. The Saviour would manifest that all previous care and steps taken towards it, were rendered vain by the omission of one. But no hint is dropped of their double-dealing or wickedness. On the contrary they are alike in *inward* character, as to their persons: in *external* characteristics, as to their *works*, and in the *principle* whence they flowed. They were alike as to their *voluntary position of separation*, and its *motive* was the same in all.

2. But secondly, that they are not hypocrites, or formal professors, is clear from the character given them by the Saviour. They are "*virgins*" all. This is the character of the true Christian alone. "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a *chaste virgin* to Christ." If virgins, then are they not "corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ:" 2 Cor. xi, 2, 3. They are pure, and purity is combined with the sister graces of "longsuffering," "kindness," "the Holy Ghost," "*love unfeigned*," "the word of truth," and "the armour of *righteousness*:" 2 Cor. vi, 6, 7. It is joined with things *true*, *honest*, just, lovely, and of good report: Phil. iv, 8. It is conjoined with the hope of Christ's appearing, and "he that hath *this hope purifieth himself even as Christ is pure*:" 1 John iii, 3.

3. If they were professors alone, or hypocrites, they would be described as adulteresses. "Ye adulterers, and *adulteresses*, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" James iv, 4. The character given of them, by Him who cannot err, would have been that, they were, to His eyes, professed virgins indeed, but really harlots. Thus the Church of Rome, which professes itself the chaste

spouse of Christ, is by Him who truly reads, and truly testifies of character before himself, described as "the Great Whore."

4. Lastly, you cannot wedge in a distinction where Christ has made none. If the virginity of the *foolish* be professed only, so is the virginity of the *wise*.

(b.) It follows from the same assumption, that the case of the foolish virgins on awaking, is a *desperate* one. If they wanted true grace all through their lives, vain and fruitless must be all hope of attaining it then. But this does not appear so either to the *wise* virgins, or the foolish. Nor do the wise virgins reject as absurd and impossible, the application made to themselves for oil.

(c.) But there is one point more assumed, which, perhaps, one might say is the radical error, from which all, or nearly all the others have flowed. This is, that the *rejection* by the bridegroom is *damnation*, and that the separation of the wise and foolish is eternal. Hence it was argued—Since none but the false and insincere will be shut out from eternal life, those so shut out must be hypocrites. And then follow the consequences just named, and others afterward to be noticed. But proof is not given, though so much depends on it. After this assumption, commentators perplex themselves to make out an *adequate reason* for the damnation of the foolish, and thus are driven to overstate the Lord's words, and to make *distinctions* where He has made *agreements*. From the same mistake it originates, that they confound *wisdom and folly*, with *wickedness and holiness*: and *loss of privilege*, with a *trust wilfully betrayed*.

Again, if the awaking of the virgins be the resurrection, then the resurrection of the saved and of the lost occurs at the same time, contrary to the express declaration of Rev. xx. Or else, *awaking* must signify *death*, and the *virgins' rising up must signify a sinner's lying down to die!*

(d.) Again, the assumption that the foolish virgins

are hypocrites, has entirely diverted the instruction of the parable from those truly concerned in it. For if the foolish be hypocrites, then are the unbeliever and the formalist the characters to whom it is addressed: and they who know themselves to be sincere, pass by this most important lesson, as not bearing on themselves. To show the falsehood then of the assumption, it is only necessary to observe, that it is a lesson of the Lord Jesus to His *true disciples alone*. If the foolish be unbelievers, the lesson is to those that are not Christ's true disciples. But the prophecy on the Mount of Olives was addressed to the-disciples, Peter, James, John, and Andrew: Mark xiii. Thence I conclude that believers are addressed in this parable, and therefore, that the foolish virgins are believers, no less than the wise.

II. On the question of their "taking their lamps and going forth," misapprehension again comes in. "They make a show of being ready." "All their care is to recommend themselves to their neighbours not to approve themselves to Christ. Tell them of things not seen as yet, and you are as Lot to his sons-in-law, as one that mocked!" Against this grievous perversion we have only to set the words of the Saviour, who describes the going forth both of the wise and foolish alike, as being with a view "to *meet the bridegroom*."

III. The same current of misrepresentation sets in again with regard to the lamp (properly "torch"). "The lamp is the *profession* of enjoying the burning and shining light of the gospel of Christ." In order that a lamp may be profession alone, it must be a *lamp not lit*. But these are lamps *lighted*. Nor have they lamps alone, they *go forth with them*: and this is *practice* corresponding with *profession*. Christians alone "*shine as lights in the world*." "Ye were sometimes *darkness*, but now are ye *light* in the Lord." And to maintain that the foolish are deficient in the

necessary display of good works, is to make our Lord's description preposterous: for He assigns as the characteristic note of folly, the not taking the *vessel of oil which lay unemployed*, the lamp being (if I may so call it) the *working vessel*, up to the very time of their awaking. The fact is, commentators blame them as deficient with regard to the *present*; Christ, on the other hand, notes their folly only in regard to the *future*. The *unused oil* is the characteristic difference.

IV. We now come to the decisive question. What is the oil?

1. Is it grace? Is it faith, or love? Then it is *internal grace exhibited in its legitimate effect, the light given*. Then cannot the foolish be hypocrites, or formalists. And to all who believe in the perseverance of the saints the question is settled, that they cannot finally fall away, and be lost: and therefore, their rejection at the close is not final damnation.

Here the inconsistency of the interpreters appears. "Grace is the oil." Oil is "the grace and salvation of God, or that faith which works by love." Then is it monstrous to affirm of the foolish virgins that "they have no principle within." Then is it a dereliction of principle in a Calvinistic commentator, to speak of their falling away. And then, even in an Arminian expositor, it is a contradiction to affirm that the lamp was profession alone: for the lamp has oil, and the oil is grace.

2. But some, seeing this, have adopted an evasion, which more directly contradicts the text. They assume that the foolish had *no oil at all*. "The *wick that had blazed for a moment*, was now burned down." "What a useless thing is a *lamp without oil*!" "All formal professors are like these foolish virgins. . . . forgetting that the *lamp without oil*—the *outward appearance*, without the *inward grace*, is useless." Against this misrepresentation it is enough to state, that the lamps of the foolish were burning for hours,

yea till midnight, not only while they were awake, but while they slept: and that their lamps did not begin to fail any earlier than those of the wise virgins. And if there were no oil in the lamps of the *foolish*, so neither was there any in those of the *wise*: for all that is stated as a matter of difference in their case is, that the wise had "oil in their *vessels*," and not in their *lamps* only.

3. But lastly, would any affirm that the oil (though the principle within which sustains the light) is something "short of true grace"? then there is no evidence that the *wise* were *true disciples*. For they differ from the foolish only in having *more* oil. It is a question, not between those who have *some* oil and those who have *none*, but between those who have *little*, and those who have *more*. If then oil be a *formal* thing, a *great deal* of it is no better than a *little*. But if it be real internal grace, then a *little* of it is as secure of eternal life, as a *great deal*. It is either *true grace in both*, or *false show in both*. The parable turns, not on the *quality of the oil as good or bad*; but on its *quantity as enough, or less than enough*. Having considered these preliminary points, let us now pass to the interpretation of the parable.

MATTHEW xxv, 1.

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins who took their torches and went forth for the purpose of meeting the bridegroom."

As regards the question of interpretation throughout the prophetic parables, this principle is assumed (the very contrary to that which is so frequently met with in commentaries and expositions), *that no part of them is trivial or useless, and merely intended for ornament*. To maintain the reverse of this, seems to me unbelief. It is a manifestation of the incapacity of the expounder, or of the fallacy of his exposition, but nothing more.

It is a mistake of which even the maker of enigmas among men is not guilty. Would any one be satisfied with the explanation of an enigma that answered with more or less adaptation some of the conditions of a riddle, but left others unsatisfied; and explained them away, as meaning nothing, but mere ornament? Much less would it be accounted satisfactory, if the explanation contradict some of the statements. But we are not left even to a clear analogy between the enigmas of God and those of men. Direct instruction of the Saviour affirms, that "the Scripture cannot be broken," and "Till heaven and earth pass, *one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled*:" Matt. v, 18. And if no jot of the law shall pass, how much less of the Gospel? But more directly still. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but *my words shall not pass away*:" Matt. xxiv, 35—a notice peculiarly applying to the discourse whence this parable is taken.

It is vain to say, as some do, that we are to take the general meaning of the parable alone, in order to obtain the lesson of it. For the general meaning can only be guessed at, till we have obtained the meaning of the symbols and action of the parable.

The first word of this passage is important, and calls for remark. "Then." This admits of two interpretations, both however, nearly agreeing with each other. (1.) We may understand it in general of "the time of the end," or, according to the disciples' question, of Christ's "presence, and the end of the age," as the Saviour says, in the former chapter, "*Then shall the end come*:" Matt. xxiv, 14. (2.) Or we may understand it more strictly, as parallel with the time described before. In days likethose of Noah (Matt. xxiv, 37—51.), in the hour not thought of by the wicked servant, at the time when the watchful and unwatchful shall be suddenly separated—"then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened to ten virgins."

A part of the parable is preparatory, or is supposed to be past before the scene occurs, to which our attention is particularly called. The first five verses are descriptive of the state of things in their principles, and accounting for the results which follow. The point of time to which the word "then" at the commencement refers, is, I judge, contained in the word,—“were sleeping.” This states the condition in which they were found, and which will have its answering scene in the hour of the Saviour’s coming. The effects which follow on the awaking are those to which the reader’s eye is especially drawn, as characteristic of that time.

But what is intended by the expression “Kingdom of heaven”? I consider the period intended by it the same with that contemplated by the parables of Matt. xiii; and that it answers in part to the time of mystery, and the present Church dispensation. The parable begins from the commencement of the expectation of the bridegroom’s return, and ends with the presence of the Lord Jesus in heaven, and His marriage supper on high. Thus the whole period, from the first setting forth of the return of the Lord Jesus as the hope of the believer, to the consummation of this hope in glory, is taken in. The same period, I judge, is intended in the parables of the king taking account of his servants (Matt. xviii); and the parable of the wedding garment (Matt. xxii).

“Ten virgins.” The number ten is used, with reference to the previous “two:” Matt. xxiv, 40. The ten represent the dead, the two the living disciples. Ten is the number of the lamps in the temple of Solomon: 2 Chron. iv, 7. Those were divided, like the virgins of the parable, into two companies of five, distinguished by their more or less honourable place, five being on the *right hand*, and five on the *left*, as the virgins also are distinguished into five wise and five foolish.

We inquire next, who are the “virgins”?

Most reply, the church in general: the visible body of professing Christians. But then the proportion of the wise is far too large. Are the half of professing Christians wise?

And further, all these are found asleep when the Lord comes. But it is not so with the church in general. “We shall *not all sleep*.” And this holds, whether the sleep be supposed a spiritual deadness, or literal death.

That they are believers, the Saviour has furnished us with most evident proofs.

1. They are “virgins.” Therefore are they chaste and pure in the Lord’s sight: 2 Cor. xi, 2, 3.

2. They “take their torches.” And all those torches are lighted: ver. 8. Then are they “*the sons of God* in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom they *shine as lights in the world* :” Phil. ii, 15. And their light is that of good works. “Ye are the *light of the world*.” “Let your *light so shine* before men, that they may *see your good works* :” Matt. v, 14—16. Unbelievers are darkness; believers only are “light in the Lord:” Eph. v, 8.

3. They “go forth.” Then are they children of faithful Abraham, leaving their homes and city through hope and faith: Heb. xi. Then are they the children of God, as it is written, “Wherefore *come ye out* from among them and *be ye separate* and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty:” 2 Cor. vi, 17, 18.

4. They go forth, “to meet the bridegroom.” Then they believe in, and hope for His appearing: 2 Tim. iv, 8. And to them belongs, not only salvation, but the hope of reward.

5. In these four particulars we have given us the inward personal character, and the outward display, the act, the constantly maintained attitude, and the *motive*. And all are pure. Where is there room for hypocrisy or lip-profession?

They have faith, as is manifested by their going forth. They have works, as is manifest by their lighted torches. They believe with the heart, as is manifest by their going out to meet the bridegroom. They confess Him before men by taking their torches. Their salvation then is certain; for faith and confession make salvation sure: Rom. x, 9, 10. These points apply to all, wise and foolish alike. For if the foolish virgins' torches were not lighted, so neither were those of the wise.

6. If the sleep be death, then are they believers, for of none else (I believe) is it spoken in the New Testament. The proof that the sleep is death, will be found in its place.

7. They all rise together; and the first resurrection is of believers alone: Rev. xx, 5, 6.

8. The parable was addressed to believers only.

They represent, I suppose, those in general who have fallen asleep in Christ, since the return of Jesus as the Bridegroom began to be preached, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost were dispensed. Hence the saints of the Old Testament are excluded from the meaning and lesson of the parable.

The reasons why the title "virgins" is given to believers in the present parable, are, I submit, two. First, the disciple's name is ruled by that which his Master takes. As then the Saviour presents Himself as the Bridegroom, the disciple takes the place of the attendant bridemaid, or virgin-companion of the bride. Secondly, because the parable is designed to represent to us the manner in which a valuable *privilege* was lost, through want of foresight; no relation was so fit to display this loss, as the voluntary one of bridemaid. This seemed to promise a place at the marriage-feast, while, notwithstanding, the honour and pleasure were lost through improvidence.

The subjects of the parable are female virgins, and as such are marked out as companions of the *bride*,

abiding with her; as the 144,000 virgins of Rev. xiv, are the special companions of the *bridegroom*, attendant on him in his passage to and fro between the earthly and the heavenly Jerusalem.

Lastly, they arise at the Saviour's first approach. Now this is the privilege of "those that are Christ's:" 1 Cor. xv.

"Who took their *torches*"—(λαμπαδες. לִפְיָד.)

"Torch" rather than "lamp" is the true translation of the word. It is a light for out-of-door use, while the lamp is fitted for in-door service: (Luke xii, 35—*λυχνος*. נֵיר.) Torches or flambeaux are larger lights than those used for the house, which last are more liable to be blown out by gust of wind and rain. Torches were, and are still, in use in the East for nuptial processions. They were vessels of iron or brass, funnel shaped, ending from a broad mouth in a point, which point was inserted into a handle of wood, that the oil might not flow down to the hand, or the communicated heat be too great for the bearer to endure, as would have been the case, had the whole been of metal alone. In this funnel-shaped cavity rags were placed as the wick, and oil was poured to maintain the light. We read of such instruments as these in Gideon's adventure with the Midianites. They were used also by those who came forth to arrest Jesus in Gethsemane, and the translation there is the same as is given above—"Judas, having received a band of men and officers from the chief-priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and *torches*, and weapons:" John xviii, 3. The same word occurs again in the account given of the meeting of the disciples at Troas, on the first day of the week. As they came out by night, they provided flambeaux to light them out and back again, and these were suspended in the room to give light while Paul was preaching, and the disciples *broke bread* in the *upper room*. The scene was, I believe, a type of the marriage-feast, here supposed: Acts xx.

That the torches were lighted and intended to give light, needs not any proof. It is assumed throughout, and incidentally affirmed of the foolish, about whose torches alone could there be any doubt : ver. 8. And the light answers to whatever of Christ's doctrines or practice is maintained by the believer : Eph. v, 13. They have both the inward principle, and its appropriate outward manifestation. The burning and shining light is the proof of the oil within. And thus faith is shown by works : James ii, 18.

"And went forth for the purpose of meeting the bridegroom." Here is not only Christian profession, but answerable Christian practice. They not only believed the bridegroom's coming, but they *went forth* to meet him. This going forth implies the leaving of their *own houses and their city*. Thus they take the position required of the members of Christ. "Let us *go forth therefore unto Him without the camp*, bearing His reproach. *For we have here no continuing city, but we are seeking the one to come :*" Heb. xiii, 13, 14. The torches and their going forth made them distinct from the rest of the citizens ; they are a body apart, both before and after their sleep. And both the torch and the act of going forth, were a testimony to others and to themselves, that they hoped for the bridegroom's appearing, and looked for a place in the procession, and at the feast. They go forth in the direction in which the bridegroom is expected, and wait for His appearing ; which is the attitude of the true believer in Jesus alone. None but he expects, desires, and "loves His appearing."

"The Bridegroom." This is, of course the Lord Jesus. "He that hath the bride is *the bridegroom*" (John iii, 29) : as John the Baptist testifies, he himself being only the bridegroom's friend, rejoicing to hear the voice of the bridegroom. "I will show thee the bride, *the Lamb's wife*." Rev. xxi, 9. See also Matt. ix, 15 ; Mark ii, 19 ; Luke v, 34.

The going forth of the virgins to meet the Bridegroom is a mark of respect, love, and delight. Thus the servants of the centurion came forth to meet and welcome their master with the joyful tidings of the healing of his son : John iv, 51. Thus also the brethren at Rome came out to meet Paul "as far as Appii Forum, and the three Taverns : " Acts xxviii, 15.

It is worthy of observation, that this mark of respect and love is said to be paid to the Bridegroom, and to Him alone. The *bride* is not even once mentioned, though, as the virgins are her female companions, we might have expected it. And, therefore, a few manuscripts add to the Saviour's declaration, and read—"They took their lamps, and went forth for the purpose of meeting the bridegroom *and the bride*." But this bears marks of being unauthorized human addition, attempting to supply a supposed defect of the word of God.

Yet we are permitted to know what is to be understood by the bride. It is not the church universal : for the Saviour supposes it not yet gathered : and the present chapter describes the manner of assembling it from the earth, and from the "gates of Hades," when they shall no longer "prevail against it : " Matt. xvi. But the bride is the New Jerusalem, the city of God, such as it was shown to John—"Come hither, I will show thee *the bride, the Lamb's wife*. And he carried me away in spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem : " Rev. xxi, 9, 10. And as it is testified of the Lord Jesus when He comes to awaken His dead saints—"The Lord himself shall *descend from heaven* with a shout : " so is it written of the bride, that John saw her "*descending out of heaven from God* : " 10. "I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, *coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride* adorned for her husband : " 2.

For the parable describes the procession of the bridegroom and bride in company, when the bridegroom

brings home the bride from *her father's house*. The usual interpretation supposes the contrary to this, namely, that the bridemaids came forth to meet the bridegroom, when he is proceeding to take her. But first, this coming of the bridemaids to meet the bridegroom alone, is not eastern; and secondly, would not be accounted consistent either with their or our notions of delicacy and propriety. The procession is to the house of the husband, as Jarchi, the great Jewish commentator, testifies was usual. "It is the custom in the land of Ishmael, to bring the bride from the *house of her father to that of her husband in the night time*, and there were about *ten staves*, upon the top of each of which was a brazen dish, containing rags, oil, and pitch, and this being kindled, formed blazing torches, which were carried before the bride." This is also the scriptural exhibition of the matter. "And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and *took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David.*" 1 Kings iii, 1. On these occasions the train of the bridegroom usually precedes that of the bride.

Lastly, the structure of the parable shows, that the procession is that of the bridegroom and bride, to the house or hall of the former. For it is supposed throughout, that his coming is a rapid and momentary passage, not admitting of delay, and not offering any opportunity of retrieving the loss if once the brief time be passed. But if the procession were the bridegroom's going to fetch the bride from her father's house, then we must suppose that the virgins meet him, accompany him back to the house of the bride's father, attend him during the ceremonies of receiving her, and that they then fall into his train as he retires with the bride from her father's house to his own. All this must produce considerable delay—a condition of things quite opposed to the rapidity and directness of the movements indicated in the parable.

2. "And five of them were wise and five were foolish.
3. They that were foolish, took their torches, and took no oil with themselves.*
4. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their torches."

In a due perception or not of the meaning of these verses lies the comprehension or misunderstanding of the whole of the parable. Commentators, almost without exception, confound foolishness with wickedness, and speak of the *responsibility* of the virgins. This leads to a train of thought utterly astray from the scope of the parable. The virgins are not described as entrusted with any thing on behalf of another, for which they were called on to render account. Then they would have been under responsibility, and either faithful or unfaithful, and so good or evil. But they are described as respectively wise and foolish. Now this shows them to be regarded by the Saviour in quite a different light from the former. Prudence consists in a care of *our own interests*; as faithfulness consists in watching over *the interests of another*. Wisdom (or more properly 'prudence,' *αἱ φρονιμοὶ*) is concerned in the provision for our own advantage *in the future*; while folly is displayed in a careless contentment in the present, and the disregard of the means necessary to secure a man's well-being hereafter. Accordingly wisdom and folly are displayed by the different behaviour of persons under the same circumstances, in proportion as they act in a manner adapted to advance their own interests. This, therefore, is evidently distinguished from the case of the servant, who is not left to his own will, but is under orders, and is acting not for himself, but for his master's advantage, under a sense of account to be rendered in. Hence, in the

* *ἑαυτῶν*. Thus translated, it is seen to be an error to suppose that the foolish had no oil in their torches. Had that been the meaning, the expression used would have been *ἐν αὐταῖς*. Something additional and distinct is implied by the present words: Matt. xii, 45; Mark ix, 8.

parable of the talents, the accepted servant is addressed as "*Good and faithful*;" the rejected as "*Wicked and slothful*." But the unjust steward, when he is regarded as acting with a view to advance *his own interests*, is praised for his *prudence*; for he thoughtfully regarded the calamities that would be likely to fall upon him *in the future*, and contrived to ward them off. This example shows us that *prudence* is by no means equivalent to *holiness*. Nay, the Saviour goes on to say, that the children of light are more deficient in prudence for eternal glory, than the children of this world are for the present scene. And *believers* are sometimes addressed as being foolish, or are cautioned against it—"Therefore be ye not *foolish*;" (*αφρονες*) Eph. v, 17. "Thou *fool*, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die:" 1 Cor. xv, 36. "O *foolish* Galatians, who hath bewitched you?" "Are ye so *foolish*?" Gal. iii, 1, 3.

Thus then it is with the virgins before us. They are all the children of light, but some are deficient in foresight, and the provident securing of their own advantage. And the advantage to be secured in the present instance, is the possession of a place at the wedding feast of the Lord Jesus. Now, in proportion to the value of the privilege ought to be their zeal and forethought, to assure themselves of it, and to guard against any possibility by which the desired object might be snatched from their grasp. But this prudence was possessed by but half of the number. Five only were wise, and five foolish.

These five were foolish, because so much pains were spent on attaining the end, and yet in vain, for want of forethought for the future. Vain the going forth, the preparation and lighting of the lamp, its first supply, and the watching for the bridegroom. All the other steps were useless, for want of the second supply.

They are wise or foolish in the Saviour's eyes from the very first, and He stamps their character, before He

proceeds to display it. The not taking the vessel of oil is the *one step of folly* which draws on the disastrous result, and this Jesus sets forth as the single point which characterises them as wise or foolish to His eye. But the foolish do not see their error till the close. Nor are its consequences *manifested* till then; although all the succeeding parts of the parable are intended to exhibit the results of the error. But during the time of delay, the improvidence does not appear, for the bridegroom's tarrying is the time of mystery in which we now live. But at the coming of the bridegroom, a new state of things ensues, and the wisdom of the wise is apparent, and their foresight is crowned. But the bridegroom rejects the foolish, that their folly may appear. A very little prudence would have sufficed to attain the desired end. They might have been prepared against all mischances, by the simple provision of a little extra oil. The foolish virgins were indeed prepared, if the bridegroom came at the usual time; but the wise alone were prepared, whether his coming were early or late. Under no circumstances of delay could the prize escape *their* hold. Their torches could be made to burn till morn. But the foolish virgins left a loophole, through which loss might enter; and at that neglected and unguarded entrance, it did come in. Their want of vigilance herein was either ignorance, not discerning the need, and not advertised of it; or, reasoning folly, not receiving the warning when given. Their thought, and their plea, if asked—Why they had not provided an oil vessel in case of need? would have been, doubtless, that it was not *essential*, not *absolutely necessary*. They had enough for the present; why should they imagine that anything more was required? The bridegroom might come very early for anything they could tell; and then, where would be the wisdom of troubling themselves with an additional burthen?

Since the whole force of the lesson of the parable

depends on the meaning we attach to the second supply of oil, I shall consider the point at some length.

First, I suppose it will be granted, that by oil is meant the grace of the Holy Ghost. And this is two-fold : either sanctifying or miraculous.

i. If then I show that the second supply is not sanctifying grace, it will follow that it is miraculous endowment, or "the gift by grace."

1. That it is not any difference in degree of sanctification which is in question, is clear from this—that then the parable would supply us with no rule by which to discern between wise and foolish. For if you tell me only, that the difference lies *in degree of sanctification*, if you do not point out the *degree*, I must either be terrified or secure. Terrified, if I think I have not the degree requisite, while none can satisfy me what the degree required is ; or secure, that I have some grace, and why may not that be enough to set me among the wise ?

2. It cannot be any degree of sanctification, for *this oil gives no light* to the world. It is unemployed in good works, which is the meaning of the light of the torch.

3. As being a distinct supply, it follows that the oil in the torch might be without that in the vessel, or *vice versa*. But it is not true that any degree of the grace of sanctification can be distinct from its display in good works. There cannot be two supplies of it, independent the one of the other. But miraculous gift is distinct from, and may be independent of, *grace* : Matt. vii.

Three other proofs, arising from (1) the request of the foolish, (2) the answer of the wise, and (3) the means of repairing the error, will be found in another part.

ii. The further relations of the two supplies prove it. The oil in the torch is essential now, the oil in the vessel is not essential now. Such is also the relative difference between the present necessity of sanctifying grace, and of miraculous gift.

iii. The second supply is additional, something *beside that* of the torch : and such is the place which the gifts of the Holy Ghost take, as compared with His graces.

iv. The second store agrees with miraculous gift in point of order. It is *in succession after it*. First the torch, then the vessel of oil. So of gift it is written—"In whom also *after that ye believed*, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise : " Eph. i, 13.

v. If they be all believers, the difference must be one which is *not essential to salvation*. And among things not essential to salvation, what so great as the difference between the possession, or the want of, the gifts of the Holy Ghost ?

vi. It is met and sustained by *fact*. Between the believers of modern times and the ancient church, there is, in this particular, just the difference supposed : the one possessing, the other wanting, the gifts of the Spirit.

vii. A consideration of the *order*, in which the wise and foolish appear, beautifully confirms this. We have the "*wise*" presented *first*, then the "*foolish* : " ver. 2. Then again the "*foolish*," and lastly the "*wise* : " ver. 3. *Thus the wise come first and last ; the foolish occupy the intermediate space*. And has it not been exactly thus with the Spirit's gifts ? They were possessed at *first*, and *then ceased* ; and the whole dreary interval of 1600 years has been taken up by believers destitute of them. We might conclude, therefore, that as gifted believers began the series, and ungifted ones have followed, so in the last days, gifted believers will rise again, and close the train. But we can show by Scripture, independently of inference, that such will be the case. Acts ii, 17, 18 ; Mark xiii, 11 ; Luke xxi, 14, 15 ; Rev. xvi, 6 ; xviii, 24 ; 2 Tim. iii, 8 ; Jas. v, 7.

viii. On the taking it or not, the greatest stress is laid throughout the parable. On purpose to set it in the strongest light possible, *the wise and foolish agree together in every particular but this*. And the difference is *optional* ; for in things within our power alone,

can wisdom or folly be seen. So are the gifts of the Spirit made to rest upon our asking for them or not. Luke xi, 13; 1 Cor. xiv, 1. In the asking for, and receiving these, therefore, that *vigilance* may consist, which is the lesson drawn from the parable by our Lord.

ix. They are the "powers of the coming age:" Heb. vi, 5. And answerably thereto, this oil is seen to come into play, when the new age is begun.

x. They that sleep with the oil vessel, awake with it. And even thus the "gifts" of God are unrepented of: Rom. xi, 29.

xi. 1. Further, as both are described as oil, so are the same terms used of each kind of grace. In both cases these powers of the Holy Ghost are said to "*fill*" the individual. "The God of hope *fill you* with all *joy and peace* in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost:" Rom. xv, 13. The same expression is usual of the miraculous gifts. "Elizabeth was *filled with the Holy Ghost*:" Luke i, 41—"His father Zacharias was *filled with the Holy Ghost* and *prophesied*:" 67.

2. Both are said to be "taken" or "received." "They who *receive* abundance of *grace* (sanctifying), and of the *gift of righteousness* (the miraculous gifts attached to justification by faith: Gal. iii,) shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ:" Rom. v, 17. "The *grace* of God, and the *gift by grace*, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many:" ver. 15.

3. Both are called "grace." No proof is required of this use of the word, concerning the sanctifying powers of the Holy Ghost; but of its being used of the miraculous gifts take these as examples—"Whereof I was made a minister, according to the *gift of the grace* of God, given unto me by the *effectual working of His power*:" Eph. iii, 7. "Unto every one of us was given *grace*, according to the measure of the *gift* of Christ. Wherefore He saith, When He ascended

up on high, He led captivity captive, and *gave gifts* unto men:" (Greek) Eph. iv, 7, 8.

xii. But more pointedly yet, it can be shown that the *wisdom or folly of the believer, is made to turn on his possessing or surrendering the privilege of the gifts of the Holy Ghost*. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, *not as fools, but as wise*, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore be *ye not unwise*, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but *be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual* (or '*inspired*') *songs*, singing, and making melody in your heart unto the Lord:" Eph. v, 15—19. And still more remarkably the third chapter of Galatians is nothing less than a reproof of the Galatians for their folly in going back to the law, and undervaluing thereby the miraculous gifts, and works of power, which (as the apostle argues) are essentially connected with justification by faith. It was with an eye to this difference, as involving wisdom or folly, that Paul asks of the disciples at Ephesus, Acts xix, 2—"Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" This was to inquire—Do ye belong to the wise or foolish virgins? I see your torches, but have you beside them the vessel of oil? Thus the undervaluing the Spirit's gifts, or thinking the second supply of oil needless, is the folly of the foolish virgins. The want of God's wisdom, or the possession of the world's wisdom, leads them to this unhappy issue. For God's wisdom and man's wisdom are opposed. "The wisdom of the world is foolishness with God." The foolish virgins then are accounted wise by the world. And the wisdom of the world accounts the Spirit's gifts unnecessary, and the additional supply needless. But the "foolishness of God is wiser than man," and the rest of the parable is directed to prove, that the extra oil is not needless. The neglect or the rejection of the Spirit's gifts, is a false, worldly, short-sighted wisdom,

which looks no farther than *present necessity*. They are not, it is granted, essential to life before God, but the present lesson of our Lord evinces that they are essential to a place at the wedding-feast.

xiii. The additional oil was the riches of the wise virgins, the want of it the poverty of the foolish, at the coming of the bridegroom. Now this is just the place seen to be occupied by the Spirit's gifts, in connexion with the coming of the Lord Jesus. "I thank my God always on your behalf for the *grace of God* which is given you by Jesus Christ, that in every thing ye are *enriched by Him in all utterance and in all knowledge*, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you (or 'among you') so that ye *lack* (υστερεισθαι) *no gift, waiting for the revelation* (marg.) *of our Lord Jesus Christ*; who also shall confirm you to the end, that ye may be *blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ*:" 1 Cor. i, 4—8. In the possession of the gifts then lies the wisdom, and riches, and *blamelessness* of the wise virgins at the coming of Christ. But they who have them not, at His appearing are found *lacking*.

Exhortations to seek and to pray for the Spirit's gifts occur not unfrequently, in token that the additional oil is not vain. "Covet earnestly the best gifts:" 1 Cor. xii, 31. "Desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy:" xiv, 1. "As ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may abound (περισσευητε) to the edifying of the church:" ver. 12. "Covet to prophesy:" ver. 39.

The reception of the Spirit's gifts is an optional thing, not absolutely essential, but promised to those that ask. The power of procuring it is supposed open to all alike. Hence it answers to the voluntary taking or omitting to take the *second supply of oil in the vessel*. The Spirit's gifts are not essential to life, or to the Christian's maintaining a witness for God in the present state of things while the kingdom is a mystery.

But it is the mistake of the foolish to imagine that, because not essential at *present*, they will be equally needless in the *future*, at the manifestation of the Lord Jesus. So widely, however, has this error crept in, that the Saviour describes *one-half of His believing people, as made foolish by it*!

The want of expectation of the bridegroom's return, and the want of the additional oil, have gone together, as all Christian history will inform us. But the parable manifests that even the expectation of the coming of the Lord Jesus may revive, and yet that there may be no consciousness of the need of extraordinary oil, and no petition for it.

Watchfulness is a duty which, as Christ declares, applies to *all*. How this should apply to those who fall asleep before Christ's coming, is not apparent. But this lesson supplies the deficiency. If any say—"Let those watch in whose life the signs predicted are actually coming to pass, but we shall be dead ere then, and therefore the question of preparation does not touch *us*"—the parable enables us to answer, that there is a preparation required of those that shall be then *the dead in Christ*, no less than of those that shall be alive at His coming. Preparation for death is not necessarily a preparation for the Lord's coming. Sleep overtook all alike, and all appeared alike while asleep, and the Bridegroom's coming found all equally in the same condition of slumber. But at the awaking came the difference. And then the extra supply of oil, neglected as *unnecessary* before, is found *indispensable*. We see therefore, that, even as regards those that are fallen asleep in Christ Jesus, a state of things will come into play at the resurrection, which will discriminate between those who lived in vigilant preparation for the Lord's coming, and those that did not; and that it is a mere deceit of a foolish heart to compose ourselves to rest because Christ will not come in our day.

By the vessel into which the additional oil was put, we are to understand, I judge, the body. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification that every one of you should know how to possess *his vessel* in sanctification and honour. Here the body is not only a vessel, but the vessel in possession of the man—"his vessel." "Oil in *their vessels*." Again it is said, "We have this treasure in *earthen vessels*, that the *excellency of the power* may be of God, and not of us:" (2 Cor. iv, 7) where, in relation to the power of the Holy Ghost miraculously displayed by His ministry, they are called "earthen vessels." And Paul is said to be a "*vessel of election*," who was to be "*filled with the Holy Ghost*:" Acts ix, 15, 17; so Rom. ix, 21—23. The torch is, I believe, external witness to others; the oil in the vessel a personal possession and testimony to themselves.

5. "Now while the Bridegroom tarried they all became drowsy (*ενυσταξαν*), and were sleeping." (*εκαθευδον*.)

What is intended by the Bridegroom's tarrying, is easy to apprehend. The Saviour more than once dropped intimations that His absence would be prolonged. He was a nobleman going into a "*far country for a long time*:" Luke xx, 9; xix, 12. "*After a long time* the Lord of those servants cometh:" Matt. xxv, 19.

The cause of the delay is not specified, and accordingly the reasons of the Saviour's tarrying are unknown to us. The seasons and their reasons are known only to God. And the time of this delay answers to the time of mystery, during which the plans of God are greatly hidden.

This tarrying is the critical point of the whole on the part of the Bridegroom; just as the additional supply is the critical point of the parable on the part of the virgins.

Had He come earlier, He might have found all awake, and the extra supply of the wise would have seemed needless, nor would there have been any difference of result to the wise and the foolish, and the wisdom of the wise would not have been displayed, nor the disastrous consequences of want of prudence seen. But the Bridegroom's tarrying gives occasion to the *sleep*, which hinders the remedy of the error: and to the continued consumption of the oil, which makes necessary the fresh supply of the wise upon their common awaking. It is the delay of the Bridegroom, giving occasion to the sleep of all, which makes the difference between this case, and that considered by the Saviour before. Had the virgins been awake at the Bridegroom's coming, the case would have been that of the *living* saints, and thus it would have been only the very same aspect of the Saviour's coming which he had elsewhere considered.

But we must now investigate a very important question as to the nature of the sleep, and give proofs of its true signification. There are two ideas respecting it—(1.) One, that it is a blamable carelessness with regard to the Lord's coming, and a sinking into spiritual sloth and worldliness. (2.) The other, that it is intended to represent the death of the virgins. Now, that it is not a blameworthy sleep, is evident from these considerations.

1. The sleep is seemingly apologized for, by the mention of the Bridegroom's delay immediately preceding, and assigned in a certain sense, as its cause. For the case of the virgins must be ever kept distinct from that of servants under responsibility, and charged to watch. To sleep while *on guard* is faithlessness worthy of punishment in a *servant*; and hence the Saviour warns the servants against being *found sleeping*. But where sleep overtakes *one desirous of obtaining a pleasure, privilege, or honour*, which he is watching for, we at once ascribe it, not to *want of will to resist*,

but to want of *power*; and we consider the sleeping *involuntary*. The effect of the Bridegroom's delay is here simply practical; not a *moral* one, like that of the evil servant, who finding his master's coming delayed, begins to beat his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken.

2. To suppose the sleep a falling away to carelessness, worldliness, and disregard of the Lord's coming, would be to argue utter defectibility of grace given, for the *sleep is continued up to the Saviour's coming*; and yet, in spite of this, we have the highest privilege and joy awarded to those that have so carelessly slept! This would be giving licence to sin, if the sleep were evil.

3. If blarneyworthy, the parable would have been made to turn on it, and the Master's finding some awake, and others asleep, would have been the natural ground of difference between the wise and the foolish.

4. It affects all equally. The foolish and the wise together sleep, and together wake. But if the sleep were sin, either all the *wise* would not *sleep* together with all the *foolish*, or all the foolish would not *wake* at once with all the *wise*.

5. The sleep is not that of intemperance, nor that of worldly care, for they fall asleep in the position of *waiting* and *separation* which they held at first, their torches are still burning, and they themselves still undefiled.

6. Were it an error, then the parable would not (as it does) set forth the result of one *single error* committed at the first, and traced out to its legitimate consequences, but a new mistake is introduced, and the first lesson is lost, or obscured. But the sleep comes in, not as a fresh error, but as a circumstance which fixes a period to the opportunity of remedying the original mistake.

7. The wise sleep no less than the foolish, and yet retain their character of "wise:" verse 8. There-

fore, since the sleep does not affect their character for wisdom, it was not an *unwise sleep*.

8. The sleep is not *blamed*, and the foolish, even when rejected, are not reproved for it. Therefore it is not *criminal*. It corresponds therefore most exactly to the blameless sleep of death. Against this, wisdom and folly are equally powerless: however willing the spirit may be, the flesh is weak; "*they were not suffered to continue by reason of DEATH*:" Heb. vii, 23. This is that sleep which cannot be resisted, but which happens (as Solomon tells us) with like event both to the wise and the fool: Eccles. ii, 14.

9. Again—If the oil signify grace, then is not the sleep sinful, especially in the wise. For worldliness and careless indifference to Christ's coming are incompatible with the abundance of grace which the wise possess.

10. And if the sleep be death, then are all the virgins believers; for to none but such is death a sleep.

The Bridegroom's coming is not death, for death affects but one at a time, this all at once.

Further—It is the consequence of their sleep that they do not notice the consumption of the oil, and consequently do not attempt to replenish the torch. Hence the only time of repairing the error, is before the sleep begins. After that time, there is no possibility of remedy. For the sleep continues till the resurrection; and between the resurrection and the entrance into the glory of the feast, there is no time. However long the interval of sleep, it is incapable of being applied to remedy the imprudence, because of the inaction of sleep. The time of mystery, as we should expect on this supposition, runs on indefinitely longer than their life. But as it regards the virgins, it is occupied by but one condition—the state of inactivity or sleep. And it is unbroken till the Bridegroom comes. Till then not one of the sleepers arises. The old age ends to them in sleep. The new begins by awaking.

Of the two words that describe the sleep, the one (*νυσταζω*), notices the falling of the eyelids and the nodding of the head, which characterizes the passing from wakefulness to sleep, and the other (*καθενδω*), describes the state of those asleep, after that of wakefulness has been abandoned. Thus they correspond respectively to the act of dying, and to the state into which death introduces the soul.

Of the frequent places in which the death of the believer is called sleep, a few instances will suffice. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." "Many bodies of the *saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves* after his resurrection, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many:" Matt. xxvii, 52, 53. "Our friend Lazarus *sleepeth*." "Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is *dead*:" John xi, 11, 14. "After that he appeared unto five hundred *brethren* at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep:" 1 Cor. xv, 6. Here the very case in question, the constant lapse of time, is cited as the reason why those who had once beheld Jesus had fallen asleep. And in the case of Lazarus, we see the tarrying of Jesus to be the occasion of his falling asleep; while, afterwards, at His voice he arises, and feasts with Jesus.

Further—this interpretation presents the church in the two great and real divisions in which the Scripture contemplates it at the coming of Christ. The whole church will then be composed either of those "who are *alive* and *remain*," or of those who are "fallen asleep in Christ." And the passage which exhibits the church in this aspect, also teaches us why the sleep of the virgins, which seems the greatest obstacle in the way of their attendance at the feast, will not be found to be so. "I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them *that are asleep*, that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe

that Jesus died and rose again, even so them that *sleep in Jesus* will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are *alive* and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (get the start of) those which are *asleep*. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the *dead in Christ shall rise first*:" 1 Thess. iv, 13—16. And again, "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that *whether we wake or sleep*, we shall live together with Him:" 1 Thess. v, 9, 10. The parable before us then respects the great body of the church who shall be found amongst the *dead* at Christ's appearing; while in the former chapter the Saviour had addressed himself in giving *signs*, which could apply only to the *living*. But here, "they *all* slumbered and *slept*."

Accordingly, while the sleep begins at an indefinite time and at different instants for each of the virgins, yet the sleep is not shaken off by any till the coming of the Bridegroom. In the interval of suspense nothing occurs but the dropping off to sleep of one and another of the virgins, answering to the present successive decease of the saints of Christ, owing to the time of His return being prolonged.

We may further remark, that, as the period embraced by this parable extends for at least the space of 1800 years, from the time when the Saviour's return began to be expected, up to the present hour—if the sleep be supposed to be *spiritual sloth*, then the virgins must be regarded as *corporate bodies, or churches*, for such only could continue from that period till Christ's return. And on the other hand, if the virgins be *individuals*, then the sleep is *death*; for this alone accounts for the condition in which they are found during the Bridegroom's delay. But it has been already

proved that the sleep is death, therefore the virgins are justly regarded as representatives of individuals.

6. "But at midnight a cry took place, Behold, the Bridegroom is coming, come ye forth to meet him."

Midnight is the midway point between one day and another. The virgins awake into a *new day* answering to the new or "*coming age*." And though it be midnight to earth, yet to the saints it is the hour of the bridal feast. For this festal hour of the new age now begun on high, the "*powers of the coming age*," must be highly appropriate, not to say necessary. If *earth itself*, when the hour of Christ's coming hath dawned, will be filled with the Spirit's gifts, how can it be fitting that the *sons of heaven* be destitute of them?

It being proved that the sleep is death, we are prepared readily to answer to the question—What is intended by the cry, and its accompanying words of exhortation and command? It is doubtless the "shout" with which the Lord descends when the dead in Christ arise. And the words which follow appear to be those of the Bridegroom's angelic attendants and forerunners. They take the place of the servants sent at supper time to call those that are bidden—"Come, for all things are now ready."

The notice thus given before the Saviour appears, and the interval which succeeds prove, that this is not the coming of Jesus to the *living*: for that is a thief-like approach, with no notice beforehand to herald His appearing. It is a sudden flash of lightning breaking without previous warning from the darkness of the night.

The expression—"The Bridegroom is coming," represents him as still on his way. He has set forth, but is not yet arrived at the hall of the feast. This marks the time at which the dead awake. The interval between this commenced approach and its ceasing at a certain distance from the earth (when it is called his

"*presence*" (παρουσία,) gives the time that elapses between the rising of the saintly dead and their being caught up (in conjunction with the living saints) to meet him. That it is very brief, the parable shows. The Bridegroom's setting out takes place while all are asleep. But his coming is after all are awake.

"Come ye forth to meet him." The virgins *first* going forth was not enough. Here they are required to come forth *again*. And the explanation of the sleep above given, clears up the point. Their first going forth was a voluntary separation from the world. But this second coming forth is from the *tombs*. The same word is used in Scripture to express both these ideas. "There *met* him two possessed with devils, *coming out of the tombs*:" Matt. viii, 28. "The hour is coming in which all that *are in the graves* shall hear His voice, and shall *come forth*, they that have done good *unto the resurrection of life*, and they that have done evil *unto the resurrection of damnation*:" John v, 28, 29. "He cried with a loud voice, '*Lazarus, come forth*.' And he that was dead *came forth*:" John xi, 43, 44. Thus we have the very command of the parable addressed to Lazarus at his resurrection, "*Lazarus, come forth!*"

They came forth for the purpose of meeting him. And the place of meeting is the air: 1 Thess. iv, 17. The meeting supposes that the Bridegroom is moving towards the earth, and that they are to move *away from it*. The first going forth denotes the sanctification of the spirit; the second, the redemption of the body. The first act is voluntary; the second, requires an awaking from without.

7. "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their torches."

Such as the sleep is, such is the awaking, and as the awaking so the sleep. If the sleep be death, the awaking is the resurrection. And if the awaking at

the Bridegroom's coming be the resurrection, then is the sleep death.

The word used is that constantly applied to the resurrection, "Young man, I say unto thee, *Arise*:" Luke vii, 14. "Maid, *arise*:" viii, 54. "After I am *risen again*, I will go before you into Galilee:" Matt. xxvi, 32. "What advantageth it me, if the *dead rise* not." The dead shall be *raised* incorruptible:" 1 Cor. xv, 32, 52.

That the arising is not, as some have imagined, any present awakening among the saints to the importance of Christ's second coming is seen from these considerations. 1. The awaking takes place by a cry external to the virgins themselves. But this awakening of believers has been owing to warnings among themselves. 2. When they awake there is not time for the unready virgins to repair their mistake: which is not the case with us. 3. There is no universality in the sleeping or awaking, as in the parable. *There all sleep* and *all* awake together. But now on the subject of the Lord's advent, some believers are awake and some asleep.

The virgins all arise at once. This proves them all believers: for none but the saints rise at the first resurrection. "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." And their resurrection creates no stir in the city, nor does the Bridegroom's train enter it. Those who are outside are awakened by the sound, but none within the city. They rise in the same place in which they fell asleep: for the *resurrection* is not the *ascent* of the saints.

On arising, their first care is to trim their lamps. A part of the wick is consumed to ashes and makes the flame to burn dimly. They all, therefore, remove this impediment to the brightness of the torch, and the act reveals to them the state of the supply of oil. The wise, therefore, complete what is further necessary to the trimming of the torch, by adding the requisite oil.

The first supply was just failing, having lasted *for the same time in all*. Now, therefore, the necessity of the second supply began to appear. The wise are able to meet that necessity. They pour in fresh oil, and the torch is rekindled as brightly as before.

8. "And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are going out." (margin.) (*σβεννύται*.)

With the resurrection a new state of things begins. Then the difference between those that seemed equally ready before begins to be perceived. We could draw no argument against the necessity of the spiritual gifts for the coming day of glory, from the fact that God's saints have fallen asleep happily, without perceiving their need of them. There was no difference perceivable between the two companies in their falling asleep, nor in their continuing so.

But when the foolish see the wise recruiting with fresh oil the decaying flame of their torches, they become sensible of a preparedness which they have not themselves. All *need* the fresh supply on awaking, but the wise alone can meet the exigency. The old burns on till midnight, the end of the former day: but a new stock is needed for the new day that is begun. Then is it painfully felt by the foolish, that the extra supply is not as they vainly imagined, *needless*. They refused it before as *not essential*; but now the "foolishness of God" in providing the second supply, is seen to be wiser than man's wisdom in declining it. It seemed an unnecessary burthen, for the gifts of the Holy Ghost must, in an evil world, peculiarly provoke the enmity and perhaps the ridicule of men.

But now they find their want of foresight. They see at length, that enough oil for the *present* is not enough for the *future*. They see that it was folly to imagine that, what is not essential *now* may not be so *at Christ's coming*. They discern that, it is folly to rest content with the present, and not to provide for

the new state of things to ensue on the coming of Jesus and the resurrection. In the day of the bridal they find themselves unfit for that especial glory. The Spirit's powers were witnesses of the age to come before it came, but in the age that is now come they find their especial sphere, and beauty, and brightness. The want of the glory possessed by the wise will then be keenly felt. To be content with no more than is absolutely indispensable for the present, while it was thought wisdom for the time, is now discovered to be folly. The issue of the whole manifests, that while the extra supply is not essential to the character of a virgin, *it is essential to the virgins' entrance into the wedding-feast. The only oil used in the marriage procession is the additional supply.* The gifts of the Holy Ghost are "first fruits" *now*, (Rom. viii, 23;) but *then* they will be poured out "on all flesh."

The wise were prepared *before they slept*; and their wisdom shines brightly now. Whether the Bridegroom came early or late they were ready: and their torches now show it. But the torches of the foolish throw a dying light. They are not *gone out* indeed, for then oil alone would not suffice to make them ready, and they would have needed a wick, and would rather have asked for a *light* than for *oil*. But the parable supposes all to wake in circumstances exactly alike, as before they slept under the same circumstances; in order that the difference of character as wise and foolish might be the more openly demonstrated.

9. "But the wise answered, saying (Not so,*) Lest there be not enough for us and for you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves."

* The words—"Not so" are added by the translators to supply a seeming ellipsis. They might be translated sufficiently closely to our idiom—"Perhaps there would not be enough for us and you."

It has been thought by some that this reply of the wise was intended as a keen cutting rebuke of irony. A strange supposition! Even from a believer to an unbeliever this were unkind, but between believers impossible. Those who could taunt the unwise with their folly when grace alone made them to differ, would not be fit to enter at once into the wedding-feast of love! But in truth there is not a particle of the style of irony about it. And had the words of the wise been those of derision, the counsel offered would not have been taken by those to whom it was given; since indeed it were no counsel, but a bitter jest.

Its purport is very observable, as corroborating the interpretation given. For their answer to the address of the foolish is not, that their request is *impossible to be complied with*. This would, this *must* have been the reply, had the question been concerning the power of *the believer to communicate saving grace to unbelievers*. They do not deny the *possibility* of granting their petition, but they gently represent it as *inexpedient*: that is, they indirectly admit the power of granting it. And this answers to the fact that one believer is able to transmit the gifts of the Holy Ghost to another. Nay, the laying on of an apostle's hands was actually the ordinary way of communicating them: Acts viii, 17; ix, 17; xix, 6. And this difference answers to the difference of the oil in the torch, and the oil in the vessel. The oil in the torch could not be communicated, as being already imbibed by the wick: but the oil in the vessel was in a state to be transferred at the discretion of the possessor.

The plea of the foolish is their own necessity. The counter plea of the prudent is, that they need the oil for themselves. Had the thing been impossible, this, as the most effectual answer would have been returned; as we see in the dialogue between Abraham and his evil son. "Send Lazarus," is the request. "They that would pass from hence to you *cannot*," is the reply.

Nor do either of the parties esteem the omission on the part of the foolish to be *irreparable*. The wise do not reply, as they would have done to the *unbelieving* (were it permitted us to suppose that the wicked would rise at the same time with the just)—‘Your case is *desperate*. It is the day of resurrection. Your hour of grace is gone by for ever. Do you not see how foolish your request is? Not only have we no more *grace* than we ourselves require in order to be saved, but were we disposed to grant you any, as imagining ourselves to have more than enough, it were *impossible*.’ Instead of this, they suppose that oil was still procurable. The remedy against the omission of the foolish, as it was open at the first, so they assume it to be even at last. They take it for granted, that in the city which they had left, there were shops at which oil was disposed of. And this falls in with what has been shown above, that the Spirit’s gifts will be abroad on earth in the latter days. At this point the usual interpretations fail. The words of the wise are—“Go ye rather to *them that sell*.” It is not said, “To *him that sells*,” as it must have been, had *saving* grace been the matter in question: for who can communicate this but God? But the power of communicating the gifts of the Holy Ghost was committed at first (and therefore we may conclude that it will be so at last also) to more than one. The selling doubtless, is that kind of sale of which the prophet speaks—“*Buy wine and milk without money and without price*.” Isa. lv, 1. And we know one who was reprov’d with awful solemnity for supposing that the gift of God could be purchased by money.

The sellers are those who keep more than sufficient for their own supply, and whose office it is to impart, on certain terms, to others. Such were the apostles; to whom was imparted the power of bestowing gifts on believers of the first age.

The prudent here prudently refuse, because the

supply, though enough for one, might not be enough for two.

10. “But while they were going away to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast (*τοὺς γαμοὺς*) and the door was shut.”

The error of the foolish is not irreparable in *its nature*, but the parable is intended to show that it is not repaired in *result*. It was a question of time, but time was not afforded. The remedy came too late.

The foolish see the justice of the refusal of the wise, and perceive also that their advice is the only alternative that presents itself under the circumstances. Their going to obtain a supply is necessary, and is felt to be so; but the very means adopted to retrieve the error, only display it more manifestly. They are compelled to withdraw from the scene, and to sever themselves from the company of the wise. But this departure, though necessary, carries with it exclusion. They are not upon the spot when the Bridegroom arrives, and the procession cannot tarry. The voluntary separation, therefore, is the first step to an involuntary one. The refusal of oil by the virgins is the prelude to a refusal of a place at the feast by the Bridegroom.

On purpose to manifest the wisdom of the wise, and by contrast, *their* improvidence, as soon as they have withdrawn, the Bridegroom comes. In what follows, speed is set forth—‘The Bridegroom came—those ready went in—the door was shut.’

By the going in to the wedding-feast is, I believe, meant, the catching up of the saints, that they may enter into the gates of the new Jerusalem—the bridal city, the wife of the Lamb.

The feast is on high, for this is the place of the sons of God raised from the dead. And the parable of the Great Supper informs us, that none of those to whom the wedding-feast was first proclaimed, should taste of it; Luke xiv, 24. And hence its scene is not earth,

but heaven ; not the living in the flesh, but the saints of incorruptible bodies.

This rapture of the saints takes place at the thief-like coming of the Son of man. It is a sudden momentary glance, like the lightning opening heaven for a moment with its flash, and suddenly shutting it again. It is "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." The open door answers to the glory suddenly shining forth : the closed door, to the darkness settling on all things again.

The door that is opened and shut is, that of the house of God in heaven. "In my Father's house are many mansions:" John xiv, 2. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building from God (εκ) an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." This gives us, however, not so much the general place of assembly of the saints, as our own special locality in the city. But what follows casts light, as I suppose, upon the parable. "If so be that *being clothed we shall not be found naked*:" 2 Cor. v, 1—3. For the foolish virgins are in the condition of those who have not watched and kept their garments. Hence the thief-like presence of the Lord is come upon them unawares ; though they are clothed with their immortal bodies, because they are risen again. Yet are they "found naked ;" because in the hour in which one is taken up and another is left behind, they remain upon the earth. Thus "they walk naked, and men see their shame." The torches were the proof that they were desirous of entering the wedding, and seemed to have almost the certainty of doing so ; but they are now memorials of their disgrace. The house has been broken into because not guarded, and the master has to mourn over his loss, with the melancholy reflection that it was owing to his own want of vigilance, and not to want of warning.

Of this part of the parable we have a beautiful illustration in the book of Revelation. As soon as the Saviour has finished giving to John the counsels and warnings to the church ; as soon as He has threatened His thief-like coming, and has made promise with the obedient to sup with him (chap. iii), we read, "After this I saw and behold a *door was opened in heaven*." He is called up by a voice *like a trumpet*, a token of that which is to awake the dead, and the voice says, "*Come up hither*." And the result to himself was, that he was there "*immediately in the spirit*," as these will be there in the body also.

"The door was shut."

1. The use of a door is to shut out those without from sight and hearing. It is the means recommended by the Saviour, when we would be hidden from men, and in communion with God : Matt. vi, 6. And even thus the glory of the bridal feast is shut out from man. It is a magnificent assembly, of which the sleeping world is ignorant. The shut door hides the brightness from their eyes, and prevents the melody from reaching their ears.

2. It marks the determination of the owner to sever between the guests and those without. It is the signal of full and free communication among those that are within, and the cutting off of communication and communion with those without. It is an effectual barrier interposed against entrance from without, as it intimates also the full acceptance of those within (Luke xi, 7), and is the token that the feast is begun. Heaven has before been shut from men, as it regarded the outpouring of its earthly treasures of rain. But this shutting up is for the prevention of those without from entering in to its glories.

If we inquire by whom it is shut, we shall find it is by the Bridegroom. "A door was opened to me *of the Lord*:" 2 Cor. ii, 12. "I have set before thee an

open door, and none can shut it:" Rev. iii, 8. As the master of the house, it depends on His will to admit or to exclude: Luke xiii, 25.

11. "Now afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open unto us.' 12. But He answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, I know you not."

Whether they were successful in their errand, is not stated. But if they have obtained at length the needed supply, it has come too late. The opportunity has slipped by. The once open door is shut. It is not clear whether they are caught up into heaven afterwards, or whether they are supposed to return to the same spot at which they left the wise, and on finding them departed, perceive the loss they have sustained. The others "entered in," (εἰσῆλθον.) They "come," (ἐρχονται.)

They try their last and forlorn hope by making a personal appeal to the Bridegroom for admittance—"Lord, Lord, open unto us." But their suit is refused. It is refused in terms so strong, as to make many suppose that it implies the eternal perdition of those so addressed. But a nearer examination of the words will show us that this is not intended. Indeed, in some most important points it stands in contrast to those cases which seem to resemble it.

First, then, it is uttered by the Bridegroom to bride-maidens; and it implies, '*I as bridegroom do not recognize you as guests and companions of the bride at the feast.*' But the characters of Bridegroom and of bride-maidens are *temporary* characters. Hence while they have lost that *peculiar* and *temporary* privilege represented by the title of virgins, they may yet be *received after the feast is over*. And in accordance with this, the words, "I know you not," stand in contrast to those which are addressed to the wicked—"I *never* knew you." The address to the foolish implies only—"During the present period of

the feast, my countenance will not be upon you for joy.' But it does not add the fearful declaration, that, 'You are none of my chosen ones; your names are not in the book of life at all.'

The exclusion is punishment enough—the loss of privilege consequent upon the neglect of the call to vigilant preparation is its own sufficient recompense. They have done much with a view to the desired end, yet for want of forecast have come short of it. This loss is enough of itself. There is the being ashamed before Christ at His coming; and *shame* is the proper recompense of *folly*. Punishment is not awarded to *folly* by a judge. The damage it brings to a man's own interests is considered sufficient. None is injured but the man's own self.

A bridegroom is not judge of bride-maidens. Therefore, there is not, as in the other cases, the sentence of the judge, "*Depart from me.*" It is now only—"While I am feasting, you cannot enter, but must *wait without*. I have the key of David—I shut and none opens. I open and none shuts.' Nor is a word added as to their character. They are not addressed as "*workers of iniquity*," for then they would be more than foolish, but now they are the unwise ones among the children of light, reaping the sad wages of their imprudence. Nor is there any word of the "outer darkness" and "weeping and gnashing of teeth," as in the cases of utter exclusion. For that is the sentence on faithlessness and wickedness, and want of the wedding garment: Matt. viii, 12; xiii, 42, 50; xxii, 13; xxiv, 51; Luke xiii, 28. This silence, then, of the Saviour, on these points, in the present instance, is a *true* silence: it gives us to understand that the loss of privilege is all.*

* It may be added that a fact that lately occurred illustrated this very remarkably. At a wedding that recently took place, one of the bride-maidens came too late. She imagined that the ceremony would be celebrated at a later time than it actually

The entrance to the marriage feast of the Lamb is set forth as a peculiar blessedness: Rev. xix, 9. It is not a necessary thing, short of which is perdition. It is a glory bright but brief, before the Lord Jesus is manifested from the open heavens: Rev. xix, 11. It is not intended for all the subjects of the kingdom, but for the household. The feast may be lost, and yet the loser be the partaker in the kingdom which is revealed. And he who misses it, does so by an error answering to want of punctuality; as when a passenger, having paid his fare by a vessel, and sent on board his goods, arrives after the time required, and loses both his money and his passage. The vexation and damage sustained are, in such cases, rebuke enough. Here is a "suffering loss," a diminishing of the "*full reward*:" 1 Cor. iii, 15; 2 John, 8.

13. "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of man cometh." *

This is the great lesson of the parable applied to the disciples, and enforced by the result of the preceding history. The wise were vigilant that they might not lose the great object of their desire as bridemaids, and therefore, being ignorant at what time the bridegroom might come, they prepared themselves for the latest hour, and the most unfavourable case, that the expected pleasure might not escape them. Not only were their lamps furnished with what was indispensable

was. And the result was, that she arrived when the wedding was solemnized, the breakfast concluded, and the door shut. But though excluded from this scene through her own imprudence, and deeply chagrined, she was not rejected finally or totally, but was welcomed soon after, as a relative of the bride, and a friend of those invited.

* The words, "In which the Son of man cometh," are omitted by several good MSS. versions, and Fathers, and rejected by Griesbach, Fritz, and Scholtz.

for present consumption, but they had an eye to future need, and provided themselves with a second supply. The foolish were ready, if the Bridegroom had come early; but if He came late, their present supply of oil might not be enough. And this possibility, against which they neglected to secure themselves, as the wise had done, proved the inlet to the disastrous result to themselves. But it was wholly traceable to their own improvidence, that they were excluded from the feast.

The lesson is the same to us. Do you take, like the wise virgins, the second supply of oil. Go seek, without money, and yet with fervent, importunate prayers, the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Buy before you fall asleep in Jesus, for if you have them not ere then, it will be too late. Be ready, not for the present alone, but provide for the future of Christ's appearing. And as you know not the day nor the hour of it, nor whether He shall find you asleep or awake, prepare for either. The day of His coming will make a separation between the wise and the foolish. The Spirit's gifts are not indeed necessary for the present, but the parable shows, that for an admission into the guest-chamber of the wedding, they are. Is this indeed the lesson of the parable? How important then that we should "*covet earnestly* the best gifts!" Let me beg the believer to search the Scriptures and see whether these things are not so.*

* See p. 46.

tury after the gospel was sent forth, and continued unbroken up to the present time. The cry is the preaching of the second advent, now going on and rousing the church to its original state of wakefulness to this great doctrine.

1. But this theory cannot be made to square with the conditions of the parable. For according to it, either the virgins have not yet fallen asleep, or else, the parable is not practical. For the lesson of the parable is this; that after the sleep, no effectual remedy can be applied to the error that was committed by the foolish before it. During the sleep, there is no activity or sensibility, and after the cry, no repairing the mischief; vainly does the cry arise on the ears of those who were unprepared before the sleep began. The foolish act at once on the best advice the prudent can give, yet are excluded. Has the sleep, then, taken place? O! then, remedy is hopeless; and the parable carries with it only our sentence and doom.

Or, is the parable practical? *Then, we must be on this side of the sleep.* For, to those under the sleep, or awaking from it, the parable ceases to be practical. Even if wakened, they will not be prepared in time, if they were foolish before the sleep began. But the parable is practical; therefore the sleep has not taken place, so far as we are concerned, and the origin of the erroneous conclusion lies in the false interpretation given to the sleep.

2. The reader will notice how beautifully the above remark agrees with the idea that the sleep is death. For that is a sleep which threatens to sieze upon every believer, and once begun, the sleeper cannot be awakened by mortal power, but must continue dormant till the trump shall sound; and such as he fell asleep, such will he rise: whereas this would not be so, if the sleep were sinful; his sinful slumber would have robbed the believer of his peace and grace and partly of his glory.

3. If the oil is not obtained before the sleep, it cannot be procured in time after it. Whatever, then, the

oil be, the opportunity of obtaining it has passed by for these 1700 years. For we are supposed to stand now at the time when all the virgins wake at the cry. The parable, then, throws us back on this enquiry. *What was your state 1700 years ago, before the sleep began?* The question is not, have you oil now? But had you it then? If you possessed not the oil 1700 years ago, you cannot obtain it now.

4. Of course, this, as applied to any living individual, is absurd. Nor is the absurdity much lessened by maintaining the virgins to be *churches*. For then the parable must predict that the ancient churches of the apostles' days, (as, for instance, the churches of Rome and Ephesus) will be restored, such as they were at the first; and that the modern individuals composing them will be judged by what was the state of their predecessors 1700 years before.

5. Again, since only corporate bodies can last so long a period as the whole present dispensation, the virgins must represent churches: and if so, the foolish must represent churches of *unbelievers*. But can an assembly of unbelievers be accounted a *church*? And are half the churches to be considered as composed of unbelievers only? For then only would there be any difference between the foolish and the wise. The wise would represent churches where all were converted: the foolish assemblies where none were. For if each were supposed to be made up of a mixture of both, the difference between wise and foolish ceases.

6. Again, on the same supposition, the cry must be something *new* in the present dispensation. But is the preaching of the second advent a new thing in the dispensation? Was it not a doctrine set forth from the beginning? Is it not supposed, is it not embodied in the virgins "*going forth to meet the bridegroom?*" But if we regard it as the trump of the archangel, or the shout of the Savior's descent, this is dispensationally new, and fully qualified to produce the effects here supposed.

7. Again, is the parable to be considered as applying to the ancients or moderns? *Ancient* must be its aspect, for the virgins have all gone forth some time before the bridegroom is discovered to be tarrying. *Modern* it must be, for the cry is supposed to be taking place now. But if it pertain to the ancients, how are they described as asleep to the Lord's second advent, or awakened by any modern cry? Or if it be fulfilled in the moderns, how are they represented as all originally awake? And how can they be the same with those who went forth at first?

Let us now take some cases to show that it is not fulfilled in modern times.

1. Suppose one unbaptized and openly wicked, but roused by second advent preaching, converted thereby, fully receiving the doctrine, and dying in the faith; how is the parable fulfilled in him? For he never slept, and possesses the oil from the first. What more needs he? Or, (if you will consider his former wickedness his sleep,) where was his prior going forth, torch in hand, to meet the bridegroom?

2. Suppose a zealous, consistent believer, living in ignorance of the Lord's return for some years after his conversion; he hears, however, the doctrine of the second advent, and receives it. He *was* asleep: he *is* awake: he has arisen at the cry and trimmed his lamp. What lesson has the parable for him? What was his former state? Was he wise or foolish, asleep or awake? He *was asleep*; for he had never heard second advent doctrine. He *was awake*; for how could he get oil in his sleep? He *was wise*; for he was converted. He *was foolish*; for he was unenlightened as to the Lord's coming. The only preparation supposed necessary for him here is the hearing the doctrine of the second coming; that is, the *awakening* is supposed to be needed, not the *oil*.

How is the parable fulfilled in him? He never spiritually slumbered, because always zealous, keeping his first love. And yet he must have slept, else the

cry could not have done its office. The spiritual sleep has no place in his history.

3. The only modern case to which the parable would apply, would be as follows. The virgins must represent persons who, at the commencement of their career, heard second advent preaching, and were awakened by it to make a profession. Afterwards they fall asleep to it and to godliness in general, and again are roused by the same doctrine. What now is the application of the parable to them? The only question of importance is; were you converted before? If you were, you are ready; fear not! And the lesson therefore would be, "*It matters not if you become worldly and regardless of Christ's return, provided only you are converted before you go to sleep!*" This is a necessary consequence, if the sleep be supposed to be evil. For the instruction of the parable is clearly—Be ready before you sleep. If then the sleep be morally wrong, it is a *lesson how to be worldly so as to escape without loss*. And if conversion be the preparation required, then no believer needs any other readiness for his Lord: for the parable teaches, that the sleep of worldliness will be shaken off by every saint before the Lord appears; so that the teaching of the whole on this supposition is, *that no converted person will be found unprepared*; a doctrine, the very reverse of that declared by Jesus.

8. The personal identity of the virgins must be maintained throughout, in order to the proof of the foolishness and wisdom of the two parties respectively; and in order to the justice of the award at last. For none will, I think, argue that those who believe of the present day, are responsible for what was omitted to be done by Christ 1700 years ago, or are to be rewarded for what others did before them. Nor do any believe that their acceptance or rejection turns on the imputation of the conduct of the believers of ancient date, before the churches became dead to the doctrine of the second coming of the Lord. The few names in

Sardis who did not partake of the church's guilt, should not lose their reward through the sin even of their cotemporaries. The ground of recompense at last is personal. "Every man shall bear his own burthen." But by making the parable dispensational, personal identity is overthrown. Now wisdom and folly are necessarily personal here; for recompense is not by imputation, but to individuals, according to their own deeds. But if this be a dispensational parable, those who went forth are one party: those who slept, another: and those who awake, a third. How then, can the last justly be charged with the wisdom or folly of the first?

So then—Are they *individuals*? How then do they remain alive two thousand years? Are they *churches*? How then is the award personal and just?

9. Once more; if the oil in the vessel be conversion, then the parable is personal; for conversion is a personal and individual matter. Or, waiving this, how could any be saved in the Reformation in Luther's time? For in that day there was entire ignorance of the true doctrine of the second advent. Was then the church of that day awake or asleep? If awake, then the sleep is not deadness to second advent doctrine: if asleep, how were any converted? How can oil be obtained by the virgins while asleep?

10. Further, if the parable be *practical*, the sleep cannot be *collective and dispensational*, but must be *individual and personal* likewise.

11. But moreover, this view offends not only against the condition of the parable, but against facts visible at the present day. For though it is supposed that the cry has taken place, neither all are awake nor all asleep to the second advent; nor do all the foolish perceive their sad lack of oil, but rather boast themselves of their wealth; nor do they all apply to the wise for advice.

12. But let us present the parable according to the received interpretation thereof, and some of its many

errors will appear at once.

"The present dispensation is like unto ten professors, who took up their profession and professed to go forth to meet Christ Jesus; and five were converted and sincere, and five insincere and unconverted. They that were insincere took up their profession and took no converting grace with themselves; but the sincere took converting grace in their hearts beside their profession. But while Jesus delayed his return, they all became more and more careless and ignorant as to the Lord's second coming, and at length became totally ignorant and dead thereto.

"Towards the close of the dispensation, the preaching of the second advent went forth—'Behold, Jesus is about to return, prepare to meet him!' Then all, both converted and unconverted, became aroused to the truth of the doctrine, and removed the external defects of their profession. And the unconverted said to the converted, 'Give us some of your converting grace, for our profession is *becoming insincere*.'* But the converted replied, 'Not so, lest we have not converting grace enough for ourselves and you; but go rather to those who have it to bestow, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to procure it, Christ came; and the converted went in with him to the celestial glory, and the door of entrance was closed. Afterwards came the unconverted professors, saying, 'Jesus, permit us to enter the glory.' But he replied, 'I know you not.'

2. THE FOOLISH VIRGINS ARE BELIEVERS.

1. This may be seen, and the unsoundness of all objections against their faith may be proved by one general rule. *Apply the same observation to the wise*, for it holds good of them also, with one exception only—the possession of the oil in the vessel. If it be said for instance—the foolish virgins had no oil in their

*For the parable says—"Our lamps are *going out*." See margin.

torch; so neither, I reply, had the wise. If it be said, that their torches were not lighted; so neither, I reply, were the torches of the wise. In short, if any one will prove the foolish unbelievers, I will prove the wise to be so too. It has been said of the foolish—"they appear to be looking for his coming, but they are not longing to behold him, nor to go in with him to the marriage." Then neither do the wise desire it. Either both do, or none. Make your choice!

2. But there is positive evidence in their favor; they are all virgins. Now what is virginity? Profession without possession? Nay, for then it ceases to be virginity. Integrity of heart and life answer to virginity. Look at the 144,000 virgins; they enter into especial glory as companions of the Lamb, *as virgins*; they are guileless and without blame before the throne of God, undefiled, *redeemed from among men*, first-fruits unto God and the Lamb. Rev. xiv. 4. Again, "*The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit*:" 1 Cor. vii. 34. Such then is the character of these. They take the place of faith in abstaining from fleshly lusts. 1 Cor. ix. 27. 1. Pet. ii. 11. They are the bride's companions in glory. "*The virgins, her companions that follow her, shall be brought unto thee*:" Ps. xlv. 14. Cant. vi. 8. They love Christ, "Thy name is as ointment poured forth; *therefore do the virgins love thee*:" Cant. i. 3. To bring up an evil name upon a virgin, was an offence counted by God worthy of punishment. Deut. xxii. 19. Who then shall defend him that defames those *pronounced by his Master to be virgins*?

3. None but a believer can "go forth to meet the bridegroom;" for the going forth is not a natural and bodily movement, but spiritual, and therefore capable of being effected by faith only. An empty profession is described by the Lord Jesus as a saying, but not doing—"Son, go work to day in my vineyard"—he answered and said, "*I go, sir; but went not*."

Their going forth is their "walk" or "conversation." (*αναστροφή*.) And this is not according to the course of the world, (Eph. ii. 3. Gen. xix. 31.) but they come forth out of the city and escape from those who live in error. The leaving the city is the path of faith in the first part of the prophecy, when the abomination is set up; (A.) but it is continuously and from the beginning the place of faith in the address to the church. (B.) This manifests them the children of faith, who have here "no continuing city, but seek the one to come." Jesus is the end of their conversation. (conduct.) Then are they believers. "Whose *faith* follow." Heb. xiii. 7. Their lighted lamps prove them so. "Let him show out of a good conversation his *works*." They are waiting for God's salvation. Gen. xlii. 18. Rom. viii. 25. Jas. iii. 13. "They are to bear and *hope to the end for the grace to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ*." 1 Pet. i. 13. They are "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." 2. Pet. iii. 12. They do not walk in darkness; they have gone without the camp to Christ. They walk not after the flesh, and so are not under condemnation. Rom. viii. 1. They walk in love. How could they walk together except agreed? If they walked disorderly or not as the Christian, the wise should have withdrawn from them. "*Having the form of godliness but denying the power thereof; from such turn away*:" 2 Tim. iii. 5. They do not walk as men; they live by faith, not by sight. 1 Cor. iii. 3. 2 Cor. v. 7. They walk in good works, which God has foreordained for his people: they move onward worthily of the vocation wherewith they are called. They walk as children of light, as those who are called to God's kingdom and glory. Eph. ii. 10. iv. 1. 1 Thes. ii. 12. Only some of them do not walk *circumspectly*, but as the foolish, not the wise.

4. How differently are hypocrites spoken of! How glaring the contrast, when the Savior compares together the internal state of the hypocrite with his ex-

ternal! "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in *sheep's clothing*, but *inwardly* they are *ravening wolves*." Matt. vii. 15. "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, *hypocrites!* for ye are like unto *whited sepulchres*, which indeed appear *beautiful outwardly*, but are *within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness*." xxiii. 27. "This people *draweth nigh unto me* with their mouth, and *honor-eth me* with their lip, but their *heart is far from me*." xv. 8. If tried by their fruits, wherein do they fail? They are not rapacious, (*αῤῥαγες*) nor strive for the oil, nor rob, nor steal it, nor revile when refused, but calmly acquiesce. They differ at last, only as those who have torches burning dimly, from those whose torches shine brightly.

5. Again the foolish differ at the close, as the "*un-ready*" differ from the "*ready*" not as the *fit* differ from the *unfit*. They have a *title*, as bridesmaids; but not *preparation* as became them. *Unreadiness is unfitness, as to circumstance*, not *essential* unfitness. Bravery is the soldier's *essential* fitness for war; but he may be caught *unready*, because without his armor in a night attack. The conspirators against Paul, were *disposed* to slay him at first, they were "*ready*" when they had taken the instruments of slaughter—their daggers. Acts xxiii. 15. The Corinthian believers were *disposed* in heart before Paul wrote, to make contributions to the cause he names; but he fears lest they should not be "*ready*," and this they would not have been, if the money were not in hand. 2 Cor. ix. 2, 3. So with these: as virgins with lighted torches they were entitled to a place, but being *unready as to circumstance*, they lost that privilege.

Compare this with Matt. vii. 22. There some plead with our Lord to be admitted to the *kingdom*: and the ground of their entreaty is the possession of spiritual gift. But they are there rejected as *unfit essentially and internally*. "Depart from me, *ye that*

work iniquity." Here on the contrary, is godliness but want of spiritual gift; and the result is exclusion, not from *the kingdom*, but from *the marriage feast*.

6. For anything that appears to the contrary, the foolish obtained oil, only too late to profit them, as it regards the feast. For there was oil in the city, and they went to buy, and though the hour was late, yet the Savior teaches them (Luke xi.) that the midnight petitioner will succeed in his request, if he be but importunate; so that, though the question of their obtaining oil or not is dismissed in silence, it yet seems that they obtained it.

7. The separation effected at length between the wise and foolish, answers exactly to that exhibited in B 2.* "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at a mill; the one shall be taken and the other left." This is just the same kind of severance as that which took place between Elijah and Elisha; between Jesus and his disciples, when the one party was taken up into heaven, and the other remained on earth. Just so was it with the three apostles that were taken up into the mount of transfiguration, while the remaining nine were left below. Not that those left were transgressors, utterly to be cast out: but they were not accounted worthy of so high a privilege. The only difference in the virgins is, that that separation takes place among the dead, or sleepers in Christ; this, (of B 2.) among those that are alive and engaged in the field and the mill. The time is the same,—The day of Christ's presence or coming. The proportion is the same—*half* are *taken*, *half* are *left*. The command that enforces the description is the same. "*Watch therefore*." The whole is a question of *readiness* in that case also. "Therefore be ye also *ready*;" for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of

* For explanation of the sign, see "The prophecy on Olivet," part 1. page 7.

Man cometh." But the Savior comes as a *thief* to the *living*: in the Virgins with *proclamation*, to awake the *dead*.

I will now notice some objections.

Obj. 1. 'The going forth is not by itself a proof of faith, but the enduring to the end.' *Ans.* This is not correct. The going forth alone, is cited as a proof of faith in Abraham's case. Heb. xi. 8. *But these not only go forth, but they endure to the end.* They maintain to the close the same attitude of waiting for the bridegroom, which they exhibited at the first. They are a separate body, both when they sleep and when they rise. Had they been worthy of perdition, they would have drawn back. Heb. x. 38, 39.

Observe, the question of their faith may be proved, quite independently of the oil and the torch.

Obj. 2. Believers, as individuals, are never called virgins in Scripture. *Ans.* It is not necessary that they should. If virgins, they are pure; (*αγνός* 2 Cor. vi. 6.) and if pure, they are believers. 1 John iii. 2. But even this is not correct. The 144,000 virgins are so many individual believers: Rev. xiv.

3. THE TORCH.

1. I agree with the general opinion, in believing the torch to signify profession, though unable to bring any direct proof of its signification. But a torch is like profession, an open and visible sign of desiring the bridegroom's advent, and it may either be *empty* or filled internally; it may be either *taken up* or laid down at pleasure.

It is apparent that it cannot mean what Roman Catholic commentators would endeavor to prove—that the lamp signifies *faith*, and the oil *good works*: for then the lamp, which is outward and visible, is made to represent faith, the inward and invisible. And how can oil, the secret internal principle, represent works, which are to be displayed before men? And how can good works be transferred, any more than converting grace?

But if the torch be profession, then is the oil that supplies the wick, the inward vital principle of grace, and the light is that of good works. Then also is the lighting of the torch regeneration. The lamp or torch attains not its end till it be lighted; so neither does man begin to answer the end of his being, till he is regenerate by the Holy Ghost. And thus it is written—"Neither do men *light a candle* and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house." Matt. v. 15. Luke viii. 16. A torch unlit, is a false profession, the form without the power. "Your lamps *burning*." The burning torch is the testimony of the life and words of the regenerate soul, on behalf of God and his ways, in the midst of a dark and evil world. Such was John—"the burning and shining lamp." (*λυχνος*) John vi. 35. And the lamp and the torch differ only in appearance: the essential parts are the same; the cavity for the fuel, the wick, the oil, the light. The virgins' light then, is that of good works. "Let your *light* so shine before men, that they may see your *good works*." Light is the Christian's aspect towards the *world*. "Ye are the light of the *world*." "Among whom ye shine as *lights* in the *world*." "Let your light shine before *men*." The oil in the vessel, on the other hand, is the personal supply, the gift and seal of God, by the Spirit.

Now if the lighting be regeneration, the torches of the wise must have been lit from the first. But the torches of the foolish were lit from the first: *therefore they are regenerate*. And had their torches been utterly extinguished, it would have proved that grace may entirely fail in the believer's heart.

3. The simple fact that no account is given of the first state of the torches of the wise and foolish, and much less that any difference is pointed out between them, shows that the state of both was alike, and that no part of the interpretation is to rest on any assumed difference. For, in every rightly-constituted parable,

the stress of the story shows in what direction the lesson is to be sought for and found. Everything not prominent in the story, is not to be so in the lesson, and the reverse.

Obj. 'But how can good works be going on after death?' *Ans.* It is not supposed that they are. But the *light* and *memory* of good works, may remain after the death of the saint, as it is written of Abel's sacrifice and faith, "By it, *he being dead, yet speaketh*:" Heb. xi. 4. And it is worthy of observation, that while Jesus speaks of the torches, both *before* and *after* the sleep, he is silent concerning them in the intermediate time.

4. THE OIL IN THE VESSEL.

1. The energies of the Holy Ghost as exhibited towards saints, are either sanctifying or miraculous. Both these are, in the New Testament, embraced by one word—"grace;" as is noticed in the former tract. Hence, both are included in the parable, under one and the same symbol—oil. But these two kinds of grace differing in many respects, they are represented distinctly; the one by the oil in the torch, the other by the oil in the vessel.

Both grace sanctifying and grace miraculous are symbolized by oil. Thus we read—"Thy God hath anointed thee with the *oil of gladness* above thy fellows:" Heb. i. 9. Now, spiritual joy and gladness are the fruits of the Spirit, or what are called ordinary grace. Gal. v. 22. Acts, ii. 46. 1 Thes. i. 6. But grace miraculous is also called an anointing. "But the *anointing* which ye have received from him, abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you, but the same *anointing* teacheth you of all things:" 1 John ii. 27.

Here then are *two anointings*: and anointing supposes the use of oil. So likewise, the joint participation of gift by Jews and Gentiles is supposed in those words of the apostle to the Romans.—"And with

them partakest of the root and *fatness of the olive-tree*:" Rom. xi. 17. Eph. iii. 6. 1 Cor. xii. 13.

2. That the oil in the vessel is gift will further appear, from *the structure of our Lord's discourse*. I assume it as proved, that the Talents treat of spiritual gifts. Then it will be seen by comparison of the parts, that the parables of the Householder and the Steward (B 3. and B 4.) answer to those of the Virgins and the Talents. (B 5. and B 6.) The Householder presents preparation as a thing necessary for the believer's own interests: the Steward, as a matter of responsibility to a master; which is just the relation subsisting also between the Virgins and the Talents. I conclude, then, that the same thing is the subject of both parables: and if gifts of the Holy Ghost are the subject of the Talents, the same is the subject here: and that, what the money is in the Talents, that is the oil in the Virgins. Now, the money there is not conversion, but miraculous gift. So then by the oil is meant gift here also.

3. The day of Christ's appearing to his saints, is not the time of the display of good works to the world: but rather the time of hymeneal songs to the bridegroom, inspired by the Holy Ghost in gift. Rev. xiv.

4. That the oil in the vessel does not signify conversion may be plainly shown. Conversion and a perfect righteousness, are necessary indeed to enter the *kingdom*. Matt. xviii. 3. John iii. 5. Matt. v. 20. But that is not the question here. The point in the present case is, entrance into the *marriage-feast*, before the kingdom is displayed to the world. And gift is necessary to partake of this banquet; though not to having part in the kingdom. But conversion cannot be intended. For then, both parts of the reply of the wise virgins are inapplicable. Both their refusal and their advice are inconsistent with the supposition of the oil being conversion. If any unconverted person were to ask us to give him *some of our converting grace*, must not our reply be,—'You ask what is

impossible and *absurd*. If we even could barter away the grace by which we have been regenerated, we neither dare do it, nor would we think of doing it on any consideration.' To transfer conversion is impossible; but not to transfer the oil. The request here was similar in principle to the case of the rich man asking of Abraham, that through Lazarus, a drop of water might be given him. It was similar; for it was a request after death, made by an unbeliever to a righteous man. Only, their request is much more extravagant than that of Dives. Dives asked for water, when it was procurable without limitation. The foolish ask for oil, when there was only enough for the wise themselves. Why then did they not meet with a rebuff like that which the rich man received from faithful Abraham? Abraham's reply is in effect, "The time is past in which your state could be altered: your request it is impossible to comply with." Here is no *advice*: for that supposes that something *could be done*. But in the reply of the wise is not only an admission, that they could grant the request if it would not be injurious to themselves; but withal their *advice is tendered, as if the remedy could be repaired*: and others are pointed out, from whom, better than from themselves the desired oil might be obtained. Also, who could talk of converting grace as a matter of quantity—"some of your oil?" But he who had many gifts might have imparted one.

5. In other words, the remedy of the defect of the foolish is supposed both by our Lord, by the wise and by the foolish virgins, to be *possible in principle, though not realized in fact*.

Now if the sleep be spiritual sloth, and the cry be taking place now, then is conversion or the procuring of oil, not only *possible in principle*, but *realized in fact*. On the other hand, if the sleep be death, and the cry take place after it, then is conversion *impossible in principle, and therefore in fact*.

Either way the oil is shown not to signify converting grace.

6. Moreover, conversion has already been symbolized by the lighting of the torch: therefore the foolish, as having lighted torches, are already regenerate. And if so, this indication cannot be contradicted in any other part of the parable, so that to want oil in the vessel, is not the need of converting grace in the heart.

7. Observe also. They ask the prudent virgins to *give* them oil; but they go to *buy*. *Then they must have money to purchase it with*. And this is noticed by Solomon as a strange thing, which was exemplified in their case. "Wherefore is there a *price in the hand of the fool to get wisdom*, seeing he hath no heart to it?" Prov. xvii. 16. What then is the price which they have to give? Clearly they can plead the *promise* of the gift of the Spirit. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father *give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*" Luke, xi. 13. "Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost: for the *promise is to you* (jews) and your children, and *to all that are afar off* (Gentiles) *as many as the Lord God shall call*" Acts. ii. 38, 39. The buying then is *spiritual*, not literal, as Simon Magus thought. They plead these promises, which answers to the presentation of a bank note, which is 'a promise to pay,' or to the king's own image enstamped on the coin. *But if so, they must be believers*. For unbelievers, as we see by the instance of Simon Magus, have "*no part or lot in this matter*." But these have: they have the claim to urge, though before that time they have neglected to ask. Then their "*heart is right with God;*" (Acts. viii. 21.) else to them the promise could not belong. God's promises carry his own image and superscription; they are his pledges, that we shall receive in return for them, if presented to him through Christ, the thing that we need in exchange. They belong to the believer, and are presented by him as sterling gold to God. They then who deny that the promises are to be used now, virtually declare God's promises to be, not sterling gold,

but base coin : whereas, he declares they are current throughout the dispensation, and neither recalled nor depreciated in value.

8. A remarkable confirmation of the present interpretation will be found in the Savior's epistles to the churches of Laodicea and Philadelphia. For, what saith Jesus to Laodicea ? "I *counsel* thee to *buy* of me *gold* tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ; and *white raiment*, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear ; and *eyesalve* to anoint* *thine eyes*, that thou mayest see." Rev. iii. 18. By the gold, as I believe, is intended faith to endure persecution :† by the raiment, good works ;‡ and by the anointing eyesalve, the gifts of the Holy Ghost.††

This is the Savior's address to his church, and therefore the parties are *believers* : which confirms the proofs that the foolish are so. But the believers of Laodicea were in a lower state of grace than the foolish virgins ; for while, as we have seen, the qualifications of the wise virgins are *these very three*, faith, good works, and gifts, the foolish are possessed of the two first to an equal extent with the wise.

This epistle instructs us farther in the causes of the deficiency of the Laodicean believers, a proud self-sufficiency and persuasion that they were rich and had need of nothing. The counsel given by Jesus, is the same as that given by the wise, to go and buy. This shows, that as believers, they have *some* faith, though their lukewarmness proves it to be but small. Here the gifts of the Holy Ghost are represented under another form, as the remedy for the *present* and *personal* defect of blindness. There is no mention of sleep ; for the address is concerning the living only,—“the things that are ;” and Jesus himself is presented as the merchant of whom they are to buy.

*Εγχαρίσαι. Bloomfield, Griesbach, &c.

+ 1 Pet. i. 7. † 1 Tim. ii. 10. Rev. ii. 26 ; xix. 8. †† Acts x. 38. 1 John ii. 20, 27.

He adds,—“Behold I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he (shall sup) with me.” Here Christ knocks, and the wise are to open the door ; as in the parable, the virgins knock and Christ opens and shuts the door. The knock is the Savior's warning ; and he that hearkens to the advice of Jesus, will be admitted to *close communion and acquaintance*. “*I will sup with him,*” which is the prior step to being admitted to sup with Jesus. This throws great light on the words “I know you not,” addressed to the foolish. For they listen not to the knock, and in consequence are not admitted to that peculiar personal acquaintance in which the wise rejoice. Moreover, *after the promised feast appears the kingdom*. The conqueror shall sit down on Jesus' throne.

But while the epistle to this church presents us with the foolish virgins : the preceding epistle to Philadelphia offers to our notice the wise. Thus the same order obtains between them as in the parable ; *first the wise, then the foolish*. In the epistle to Philadelphia, Jesus is exhibited as the bearer of David's key, shutting and none opening. But to the wise he says—“I have set before thee *an open door*, and *none can shut it*.” And the reason is, that Philadelphia as being wise, has “kept” Christ's “word.” John iv. 10 : vii. 37, 39. The admonition to her is, “Hold fast that thou hast :” for she has the vessel and its oil, the pledge of the entrance to the feast. And lastly, in this epistle appears *the Bride*,—“the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from my God :” while upon the victorious are to be written, the names both of the Bridegroom and of the Bride.

9. The same line of argument may show us also, that regeneration cannot be the thing in question, *for there is no promise of God to regenerate any now*. That is the mysterious operation of God the Holy Ghost, breathing where he will, and as unascertainable

beforehand, as the changes of the wind. Nor could unconverted men plead a promise of regeneration: for he would not believe it till regenerate, and not believing the promise, he would not, according to the figure before us, *have the money* to lay down.

10. In perfect accordance herewith, they do not offer to buy of the wise: for on them they had no *claim*: nor could the promises be pleaded against those who had only enough for themselves. But they go forth to seek the oil merchants, who keep a larger measure of oil than is required for their own consumption; and these answer to the apostles, through whom the Lord was graciously pleased to supply his church. Accordant in principle with this is the history of the twelve at Ephesus. Paul found them to be *disciples* (Acts xix. 1.) and thence recognized the *price they had in their hand to procure the oil*. And then he enquires, whether they had received it, and bestows it, in answer to their virtual plea.

11. In order that the excluded virgins should be counted imprudent, it is necessary to suppose that they had it in their power to be ready as well as the wise. Then they must have been on a level with the prudent virgins as to the power of procuring the oil; for it is in the difference of action under the same circumstances and advantages, that wisdom or folly appears. The wise then having money and time to procure oil, and finding oil for sale, purchased some. The foolish having money and time and the opportunity of finding oil on sale, did not procure it.

1. Money they must have had: else the purchase of oil was not in their power: and they were not imprudent. 2. Time to procure oil they must have had; for the same reason. And we see that opportunity was offered, from the moment of their first leaving the city, up to the sleep. 3. Likewise, there must have been a supply of oil in the city, else both the money and time were useless, and they are not to be blamed for being destitute of it.

2. That they had money, appears also from what follows: for on rising they would have been as sensible of the lack of coin, when they were desired to buy, and went forth for the purpose, as they were sensible of the want of oil when the torch was to be trimmed. Or if sensible that they had no money, they would have complained of the want of it, and asked the wise for some. But as they ask for oil, because they had none; they do not ask for money, because they had it. The promises were theirs therefore, because they were believers: but the thing signified they had not; they had neglected to make an exchange of money for oil. Their fellows also take it for granted, that they have a price in their hand; now this the *prudent* would have doubted, if they were not certain of the contrary. For what was the worth of their advice, if they were destitute of coin? From both sources then we are sure that they had money; from their original imprudence, and from their setting out after the sleep.

Let us see what these things intend spiritually.

1. That oil was procurable, not only up to the cry, but after it, proves,—*that the gifts of the Holy Ghost are attainable by all believers during the whole course of this dispensation; that they ought to be possessed by every believer;—and that it is our own fault and folly if we do not ask and have*. The chief difference between ourselves and the gifted believers of former days, is that, though we stand on the same footing that they did, yet we use not the same means which they did. Then the common thoughts,—that the gifts are not intended for all believers,—are not to be obtained now,—and were merely designed for the first ages,—are mere errors. 2. It is evident that if the oil be procurable after the cry, much more is it before the sleep and before midnight. In other words, that now in this time of life, ere the trumpet awakens the sleeping saints, is the time to plead the promises, and to receive the supply. 3. It supposes that the promises to be pleaded as the ground of obtaining the

gifts of the Spirit, have never ceased to be in force : for "the *gifts* and calling of God are unrepented of."

12. And as the taking the vessel of oil was a distinct thing from taking the torch, so is the receiving the gifts of the Holy Ghost a very distinct work from that of regeneration and sanctification. It is in this point, that so many brethren, well instructed in other respects, err. They are regenerate of the Holy Ghost, and assume that they have received the Holy Ghost—and are possessed of some gift or other. *But that they have not received the Holy Ghost* till they have been supernaturally gifted, a single text may show. Philip preached in Samaria, and many hearing, believed, and were baptized. (Acts viii.) This is just the point where-to we have attained. *But had they received the Holy Ghost?* No; for we read, that to these converts the apostles Peter and John were sent, who "*prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost.*" For as yet he was fallen upon none of them, only, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands upon them, *and they received the Holy Ghost.*" 15, 17.

13. There is however an important difference between our case and that represented by the wise. They bid the foolish go and buy of them that sell. Now while the oil in question must be procurable by us, else we cannot be foolish now, there are none on earth able to communicate the gifts of the Spirit, as there will be then. For our supply, we must look directly to Christ; and he is able to bestow it directly from himself, as in the case of its first impartation to the Gentiles, in the instance of Cornelius. Acts x.

14. But the extremity of their case is well illustrated by the circumstances in which they stand. They are setting out to procure oil at *midnight*, when the shops would be shut and the keepers in bed, and the difficulty is at its height. This is just the time in which, as the Savior supposes, there would be the strongest obstacle in the way of procuring a request. "Which of you

shall have a friend and shall go unto him *at midnight*, and say unto him—Friend, lend me three loaves And he from within shall answer and say—*Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed: I cannot rise and give thee:*" Luke xi. 5, 7. Yet even this case is not represented as hopeless; by importunity, even at so late an hour, the loan might be obtained. Observe also the connexion between these verses and the verse just quoted above (ver. 13.) from the same passage.

15. I would now present the light which is derivable from a comparison of the present parable with that of the talents. The following tabular view of the two will present at a glance their principal connexions.

No.	TEN VIRGINS.	No.	TALENTS.
1.	Took their torches	1.	Goods delivered by Master.
2.	Some take oil: some do not. (<i>Oil.</i>)	2.	{ Distributed to each. (<i>Talents</i>)
		3.	
3.	<i>Delay.</i> Sleep. Arising.	4.	After <i>long time</i> Master comes.
4.	Converse of wise and foolish.		
5.	Wise and Bridegroom (<i>Enter.</i>)	5.	{ Five Talents and Master (<i>Enter.</i>)
		6.	
6.	Foolish and Bridegroom. (<i>Shut out.</i>)	7.	Slothful and Master. (<i>Cast out.</i>)
7.	Lesson.		

No. 1 of the Virgins places the ten on an equal footing with the servants of the Talents, as true Christians. Those called by the Master are "his own servants." Thus the virgins take their torches and go forth; and it is very observable, that in the parallel parable of the Pounds, there are *ten* servants, as there are *ten* virgins here. But they differ throughout, in that the virgins are acting *spontaneously*; the servants are *under responsibility*. Therefore the virgins *take* their torches, but to the servants the goods are formally *delivered* by the Master, to be held in trust.

No. 2 of the Virgins is equivalent to Nos. 2 and 3 of the Talents. No. 2 of the first parable presents the *oil*; No. 2 of the second parable the *talents* committed; each of them signifying in its place the Spirit's gifts. The taking of the oil or not in the one, answers to the trading with the talent or not in the other. *Optional possession* is the question of the one; *responsible use* in the other, for there the question is fidelity to the Master. But in both the point of distinction is here presented, which ultimately leads to the difference of award in the close. Prudence is the glory of the one, and privilege attained is the reward: faithfulness is the glory of the other, and exactly suited recompense the reward in the other. In the Virgins, the present life is presented as *the time for procuring the gifts by those not possessed of them*: in the Talents as *the time for using them by those who are possessed of them*.

No. 3 of the Virgins is in a great measure peculiar to itself, for in the Talents there is no notice of death or resurrection, but all the gifted, whether dead or alive, will on these principles be judged; therefore the use of the talent is represented as going on till the Master's return.

In part however, No. 3 of the Virgins answers to No. 4 of the Talents; for into these portions is thrown the long interval of the Savior's absence, represented by the bridegroom's delay in the one, and the Master's

absence in the other: both of these give occasion to the characteristic actions of the parties and the lessons of the parables. In the Virgins, the period of delay gives occasion to the sleep; in the Talents, the absence of the Master gives room for the trading and gain of the faithful servants. In the Virgins, the oil is not used till after the resurrection, and its use then is displayed; but in the Talents, the money is in use till the Savior appears, and the present employment and utility of the gifts is exhibited. The cry is the critical point in the one; the return of the Master in the other.

No. 4 of the Virgins, or the conversation between the wise and the foolish, is peculiar to itself.

No. 5 of the Virgins answers to Nos. 5 and 6 of the Talents, for these two portions give the recompense of the faithful, who are divided in the talents, while in the Virgins the wise constitute but one body. And *difference of reward* does not enter into the object of the Virgins, while it does into the Talents, for the talent of the slothful is given to the possessor of the ten talents. And so in the parable of the Pounds yet more conspicuously.

No. 6 of the Virgins corresponds with No. 7 of the Talents, for here the foolish are dealt with by the bridegroom, and the slothful servant is judged by his Master. But as the difference is very great between the moral standing of the foolish virgins and that of the slothful servant, equally great is the difference between the awards given. The foolish virgin is ignorant or careless; the slothful servant sins wilfully against his lord. The foolish *love* the bridegroom and his appearing, but perceive their error only when too late to set it right. The slothful servant, on the other hand, wrongs his master by hard thoughts, unjust accusation, and conduct injurious to his interests, holds fast his sin to the close, and repents not, imputing his evil to his lord. Hence very different is the recompense; the foolish lose a privilege and stand without; the other

enters, and is cast without into darkness and gnashing of teeth.

No 7 of the Virgins is peculiar to itself; or perhaps we might say more accurately, it is the ligament that connects both; being the lesson of vigilance which is appropriate alike to both the parables. Let me now therefore proceed to draw from the Talents those conclusions which affect the interpretation of the Virgins.

1. It has been objected, that gift is to cease at the resurrection. Now the parable of the talents offers proof positive against this idea. Assuming it proved in the explanation of that parable, that the talent signifies a gift of the Holy Ghost, it evidently follows from the disclosures there, that the gifts are possessed by believers after the Savior's audit of judgment, and the resurrection from the dead. Nay further, *they constitute the riches of that day; happy is he that has the most!* And another talent is adjudged to him that has the ten, as a peculiar privilege and possession to be then enjoyed by him. "Give it unto him which *hath* ten talents."

2. As to the request of the foolish virgins for oil. The master in the Talents admonishes the slothful servant, that he had better have transferred his talent to another, than have retained it unoccupied himself. This proves that the proposed transference of the oil, is a proposal to confer a gift, and is possible in principle, as was noticed there. But not only so: it shows that the servant would have been received finally, and without his lord's displeasure, *had he been found ungifted at last.* But this is, as I have shewn, just the case of the foolish virgins: therefore their exclusion is not total, or entire shutting out from the kingdom. Just such would have been the case of one of the wise virgins, had she (moved with compassion) given to one of the foolish the supply of oil she needed herself. On the present view, this is easily accounted for. But on the usual interpretation, what, I ask, would have been the result to one so acting? *Would it have*

been a sin, a sin entailing damnation? Against which of the precepts of Christ would it have been an unpardonable offence? Against which would it have an offence at all? As surely as transference of the talent would not have been criminal in the servant, so neither would the bestowal and transference of oil have been a crime in the virgins. It would indeed have made the virgin *imprudent* and inattentive to her own interests, but it would in no sense have been *wicked*. Nor would the bridegroom of the parable have cared to enquire, or been justified in enquiring, *whence came the oil* of that foolish one, who, by the kindness of one of the wise, was enabled to enter into the feast.

I will now notice some objections to this view.

Obj. 1. The gifts were to cease when perfection came. *Ans.* Perfection is not already come, either (1) in the circumstances of the church, or (2) in its internal state. We are not yet come to unity of the faith, nor are the saints perfect, nor the work of the ministry completed, nor are we so stable as not to be carried about by divers winds of doctrine, and the craft of men. Eph. iv. Nor is there, as is affirmed, any difference in kind between the gifts of 1 Cor. xii. and those of Eph. iv. apostles, prophets, and teachers, identifying the series as the same in both.

Obj. 2. But gift will have ceased after the resurrection; for the purposes for which it is bestowed will have ceased. We shall be beyond even the unity of faith; for the faith itself will have ceased. *Ans.* It is true that the employment of the gifts in the edification of believers will have ceased. But that is not their only aspect. Prophecy has other uses than simply the edification of the saints on earth. And prophecy exists after the resurrection; (Rev. xv. 4.) and inspired songs, the dictate of the Holy Ghost, are still sung. Rev. xiv. 2, 3. Perfection therefore, in the apostle's sense, is not even then come.

Or we might state it thus. Perfection has not come to us, as the old and doomed earth remains, and the

remedial dispensation of the thousand years is yet lasting. Therefore prophecy has not ceased; for perfection is not come. Miraculous powers bestowed on the believer are entitled "*powers of the age to come.*" Heb. vi. 'This cannot mean that they will cease when the age, of which they are foretastes is come.

Obj. 3. This interpretation supposes that gift is transformed into grace, when the oil of the wise is added to the torch. *Ans.* The second supply of oil is not used till after the sleep, and therefore there is no confounding of gift with grace, as is supposed in the objection. After the resurrection, it is no question of *good works*, for the time for those performances is past. Thus the two aspects of the oil, by the very structure of the parable, are kept separate; and the Christian should glorify God in manifestation of the Spirit no less than by good works.

Obj. 4. But will the raised ungifted saints have to look for gifts from living apostles? *Ans.* If you mean by God's ordinance—No! If as a last resource in a pressing emergency—Yes! It is enough for the interpretation to show that the virgins suppose that there would be such on earth. Whether they will be borne out by fact I am not bound to show, though even that may be made to appear; for if Elias comes first to restore all things, he must restore the spirit of prophecy among the number: and it is in this character that he is presented as the olive-tree supplying with oil the bowl of the lamp. Zech. iv. Rev. xi.

Obj. 5. No such rejection of the gifts as you imagine, is mentioned in the New Testament. *Ans.* I have supposed that the neglecting to take oil may arise from one of two causes, either entire ignorance, or reasoning folly. The Scripture presents us with an instance of not possessing the gifts from the first cause, in John Baptist's twelve disciples at Ephesus; and our own times present us examples of both causes in operation.

Obj. 6. You say, the foolish must have had oil; the Lord only says, 'they took none.' *Ans.* Their *torches*

must have had some; but personal supply they had not. Their torches were burning at least an hour, probably six: if they went out at sunset, which would be the time of expectation. The Lord does not deny that there was oil in the *torches* of the foolish. He says "they took no oil," *not absolutely, but not "with themselves,"* the *personal* supply, so to speak. This leaves untouched the question whether the torch had any oil; the negative is not inserted till after it. But the case of the wise as opposed to that of the foolish, makes the matter quite clear. These "took oil in their vessels together with their torches." The wise *do* what the foolish *did not*. *The wise took oil in another vessel beside the torch. This then, as the characteristic difference, is just the point which the foolish failed to do.* But here again, the question as to the torch having oil is quite left open; that must be learned from other circumstances, and it is decided by this: that if you deny that the *torches* of the *foolish* had any oil, I deny it equally to the torches of the *wise*. For on this point they stand on equal ground precisely. And if the torches of the wise had no oil, neither were they *lit*; for it were quite contrary to wisdom to light a torch without oil. And if the torches of the wise were not lit, then neither were the torches of the foolish. But the torches of the foolish *were lit*, ver. 8, therefore the original assumption is false, and the torches of the wise and of the foolish alike had oil.

Obj. 7. The motive you assign as the reason why the wise virgins take the oil is not specified in the New Testament. *Ans.* It is not necessary that it should be. First, let me grant, for the sake of argument, that I was wrong in supposing this to be the motive of the wise, and that, where the parable is silent, I should have been silent too. But even on this low ground, the interpretation is not at all affected by the admission. Whether the prudent took the oil with a view to such an expected result or not, *such was the issue in fact.* The oil was needed, and the wise virgins had it to

supply their need, and entered into the feast as the consequence of possessing it.

But secondly, that the prudent ones (*φρονιμοι*) took the oil with this view, is manifest from the nature of prudence. "The prudent man looketh well to his going:" Prov. xiv. 15. Then these calculated beforehand the probable need of oil, and took it as the result of their forethought. "The *prudent* (man) *foreseeth the evil* and hideth himself: but the simple pass on and are punished." (suffer loss.*) Prov. xxii. 3.

Now it was not prudence on their part, if the need was not perceived beforehand as probable, and the supply of oil was not taken as the remedy. But the probability of the need of the supply arose from the likelihood of delay on the part of the bridegroom. Thus all the points hang together and mutually support each other.

3. Lastly, it is certain that this very motive will influence all who believe the present interpretation of the parable, and are led to seek and ask for spiritual gifts in consequence of it.

5. THE SLEEP.

Sleep has two spiritual significations in the New Testament; it may be spoken either of the slumber of worldliness or of the sleep of death. Mark xiii. 36. 2 Pet. iii. 4. But they are distinguished by several marks; the chief of which is, that the one is a *criminal* sleep against which the Savior uplifts his voice in caution: the other is a *blameless* sleep. Which of the two kinds of sleep then is that presented in the present instance?

1. If the sleep be evil and blame-worthy, it must signify worldliness, an immersion in the cares and pleasures of life; as it is written in this very prophecy—"Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be overcharged with *surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life*, and so that day come upon you unawares."

"*Watch ye therefore:*" Luke xxi. 34, 36. There is no instance of its signifying ignorance or neglect of any special doctrine; it is not a theoretic slumber but practical. This then being the slumber, that (as is supposed) has crept on all Christian professors, it is thrown off at the period of the cry. But if so, all are true Christians; for how can spiritual *drowsiness* come upon the spiritually *dead*? Or who can throw off attachment to the cares and pleasures of the world but the believer? For there is no victory over worldliness but that of faith. 1 John v. 4. How much less is worldliness shaken off by all the professing church! Either then the sleep is not worldliness, or the foolish are believers.

2. Again, if it be granted that the sleep means only ignorance and indifference to the coming of the Lord, then we may ask,—Can any be accounted *wise* who are both ignorant and careless as to the coming of our Lord Jesus? To miss so capital a doctrine of the Old and New Testaments would prove any to be *unwise*, and not understanding what the will of the Lord is. Can it be that Jesus could, in the very act of teaching his church that all wisdom or folly turns on preparedness for his coming, call those *wise* who totally forget and are dead to it? The wise "*sleep not* as do others:" 1 Thess. v. 6. If the sleep then be thus interpreted, since it destroys the wisdom of those whom the Lord calls wise, such interpretation must be false. It must be false too, because it makes folly to lie in part in the *sleep*; whereas Christ makes the sleep common to both the wise and foolish, and indifferent to the question of their wisdom or folly, and rests the stress of that question wholly on the possession or want of the oil in the vessel.

3. *Blameable* sleep is that which takes place under circumstances of responsibility, or where a charge has been given by a master to watch. Such would be the case if a householder having left a charge to the porter and all the servants to keep awake, should come sud-

denly and find all asleep. Mark xiii. 36. In the gospel history we have specimens of the two kinds of sleep. The favored three, Peter, James, and John, slept both on the mount of Transfiguration and in Gethsemane. But for the first sleep they are not blamed; for the other they are, because they were bidden by the Savior to "watch and pray." The sleep of the virgins then is the blameless sleep; for they were under no command to keep awake: nor by sleeping did they betray any trust. Had the sleep of the parable been an evil sleep, the Lord would have come on them as a thief, and have caught them in their slumbers. "If therefore thou *shalt not watch*, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou *shalt not know* what hour I will come upon thee:" Rev. iii. 2, 3. "Lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping."

4. Blameable sleep would have been the hindrance to glory. Had the sleep been spiritual sloth, the wise virgins could not have appeared with joy before the Lord. We must have heard from them the voice of wailing, and confession with sorrow. They could not have stood "blameless in the day of the Lord." They must have been rebuked as unworthy, and as falling into the very sin forbidden them: the recompense must have been denied alike to all, because all slept. Or else the Savior's parable proves the very contrary to that which he designed, and shows the harmlessness of that unpreparedness whose mischief he wishes to display. For the criminal sleeper, in despite of it, enters into the Savior's exceeding joy.

5. To maintain the sleep to be evil, is to make the symbols contradict one another. For though they all slept, yet their sleep made no difference in their attitude. They were all separate from the city, and advanced to meet the bridegroom, both in position and desire. Had they gone back towards the city before they fell asleep, the two indications had been in harmony; but as it is, this is to make the sleep contradict the going forth, which is of faith.

6. But everything that is said of the sleep harmonizes beautifully with the sleep of death: both wise and foolish fall before it. And this is noticed as the characteristic of death more than once,—“He seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish;” Ps. 49. 10. This explains why all together sleep and together wake.

7. It takes place in consequence of the bridegroom's tarrying. Then is its meaning beautifully exhibited in the history of Lazarus. He becomes sick; this is the becoming drowsy, which precedes the virgins' deep sleep. The sisters send to let Jesus know; but how does he answer it? “When Jesus heard that he was sick, *he abode two days still in the same place where he was.*” The result was, as the Lord revealed it to his disciples,—“Our friend Lazarus is *fallen asleep*,* but I go to awake him out of sleep.” The disciples understood Jesus literally.—“Lord, if he sleep he shall do well” (recover.) “Howbeit, says St. John, Jesus spake of his death, but they thought that he had spoken of taking rest in sleep. *Then said Jesus unto them plainly, ‘LAZARUS IS DEAD.’* Here therefore, we have an instance of sleep coming on in consequence of the bridegroom's premeditated tarrying, and of the meaning of sleep being misunderstood by the disciples. And the two sisters, one after the other, object to Jesus his tarrying as the cause of their brother's sleep. “*Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.*” “Thy brother shall rise again,” saith Jesus. “I know that he shall rise again at the resurrection at the last day,” is Martha's reply. The present then is the time—the last day, when the righteous, like Martha and Mary, having heard that Jesus is coming, go out to meet him. At the grave, Jesus “*cried†* with a loud voice, *Lazarus, come forth!* And he that was dead came forth.”

*Κεκοιμηται.

†Εκραυγασεν. In the Virgins the “cry” is also κραυγή.

8. Similar is the confirmation arising from the two chapters which treat of the resurrection. In the fifteenth of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul divides the church of Christ into two great classes, the living and the dead saints, and he treats of each of these separately.* Now throughout the chapter, sleep is taken to signify death. "The greater part remain unto this present: but some are *fallen asleep*." 6. "They also who are *fallen asleep in Christ* are perished." 18. Christ is become the first-fruits of them *that slept*." 20. "*We shall not all sleep*." 51. This therefore is not the case of all the church of Christ, but only of the dead saints; for indeed different tests of preparation for the Lord are proposed to those who are alive when he comes, and to those who are among the sleepers.

9. In 1 Thess. iv and v, we have likewise the case of the living and of the dead saints treated separately, and both the blameless and the criminal sleep are exhibited. "The *sleepers* in Jesus shall God bring with him." "Let us not *sleep* as do others." The living and remaining are one party whom the apostle addresses concerning the dead in Christ. "Sorrow not concerning them which are *asleep*, even as others who have no hope." To the dead Jesus descends with a *shout*, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God.

But the next chapter displays the world overtaken by the day of Lord, as by a thief,† without noise and suddenly. The saint therefore is not to sleep the blameable sleep of worldliness: while if he be overtaken by the unavoidable sleep of death, he need not fear, "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for

* The chapter is divided into seven parts, as follows:—i. 1—11. ii. 12—19. iii. 20—28. iv. 29—34. v. 35—49. vi. 50—54. vii. 55—58. In part three the case of the righteous *dead* is decided; in part six, the case of the *living saint*.

† It has been said that Christ does not come to his church as a thief. This is a mistake. If it watch not, he will. Rev. iii. 2. 3.

us, that, whether we *wake* or *sleep*, (are alive or dead) we should live together with him."

10. Nay, the very prophecy on Olivet is founded on this distinction. The Savior, in his address to the church, (B) turns first to the living and then takes up the case of the dead: as may be seen in the tabular view in part iii.

11. To conclude this head: it is manifest that the caution—"Watch therefore," with which the parable concludes, does not refer to the virgins' sleep; for if so, since all slept, none were wise, and none ought to have obtained the desired boon. But this, as has been shown, is a sleep not to be resisted: the vigilance required therefore, is seen in the conduct of the wise, to be a preparation for Christ's coming, considered as future. In order to welcome the bridegroom, the virgins needed brightly burning torches, and in order to this, an extra provision of oil was necessary, if he came late. Now sleep hinders not this provision of oil, for it is made ere the sleep begins, and so it does not render the wise unprepared. After the waking there is time to repair the effects produced by the sleep and delay upon the torches, but not the effects of the prior neglect. The wisdom of the wise is the *vigilance* required by the Lord. The moral then of the parable is not that the waking should not go to sleep, nor that the sleeping should awake, but that the living should provide themselves with the oil of the Spirit before they fall asleep.*

6. THE CRY.

It has been thought that the cry is the preaching of the second coming of the Lord Jesus, to which the church of Christ had so long been dead.

1. But if this were true, how could the Lord teach that none who went to seek converting grace after the cry were permitted to enter the desired bliss? In this

* If the sleep be death, then are not the righteous introduced to glory as soon as they die, according to the usual idea.

again, behold the failure of the theory. Have any been converted since the second advent was preached, nay, and *by means of it*? Then cannot that be the cry in question. The time of the gospel is then past, for during our time the law of the dispensation is—"Knock and it shall be opened to you." By the supposition, the foolish are sent to Christ for salvation, and they go. Now of such, during gospel times, it is written—"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." But these come to Christ and are rejected. The cry therefore is no event taking place in the time of mercy, but after that day is closed.

2. The cry of the parable is no gospel cry, for the sound of the gospel changes some that hear it. But the virgins were either converted long before it, or still remain unconverted after it. All that it does is to awaken them to a sense of the coming of Christ. The cry *makes* none wise unto salvation, but only *manifests* either former wisdom or former folly. But the preaching of the second advent is a gospel cry, that has *made* many wise to eternal life.

3. As a question of fact too, it is not true that the preaching of the second advent has made manifest to the wise their wisdom, and to the foolish their folly, which this cry does. And some have died ignorant of this truth since the cry, therefore, fulfilment is impossible.

4. The cry stands directly related to the sleep, but not to the oil. The cry then is no call to repentance and faith, for if it were, then since it awoke the sleepers, it produced its intended effect, and the hearers were converted; and so (on the usual supposition) were ready for the Savior's appearing; and thus the question of the oil in the vessel is thrown by as useless. Either then the cry in question is a gospel cry, or it is not. If it be supposed a gospel cry, effecting a change of character, it throws aside the main lesson of the parable—the necessity of a prior supply of oil. If it be supposed *not* a gospel cry, it cannot be the second ad-

vent proclamation, for that is a declaration of mercy calling sinners to faith, and effectual in God's hand to produce it.

5. The cry has evident and designed reference to them as the bridemaids, and is adapted and intended to awaken them from sleep. But this would not have been given by Christ if the sleep were evil; for he threatens those of his church who will not watch, that he will come on them *without notice*, like a thief; and they will walk naked, deprived of their garments, to their shame before men. But that warning concerns the living; these therefore who are purposely awakened by preceding proclamation, are the blameless sleepers, or the dead in Christ.

7. The sleep is continued, it has been objected, till the cry, and not (as stated in the former tract) up to the Lord's coming. But no error practically can arise from such a statement, for the cry is separated from the coming by so brief an interval, that there is no time for the unready to prepare. It cannot therefore be anything taking place now. As the cry finds the virgins either prepared or unprepared, so does the first advent. So that the cry may be considered as virtually the second advent. It is at this point that the parable is brought into contact with the Savior's return. The previous time is spent in taking the torches and the oil, the going forth, the waiting, and the sleep. That is the indefinite period before the coming; but the second advent begins at the cry, and answers to the question of the disciples concerning the signs of the Savior's return. The cry then being the sign of the Lord's appearing, is the trump or the shout by which the dead in Christ are raised. For this is just the place held by the seventh trump. Rev. xi. 15, 18. The coming here is not that of Mark xiii. 36, for there it is doubtful whether the Master comes at evening, midnight, cock-crowing, or morning; here it is fixed to a little after midnight.

8. The cry—"BEHOLD"—seems to declare his ex-

treme nearness. Indeed it is used in the historic books of Scripture to declare that the object spoken of is within sight. "He lifted up his eyes and saw, and *behold* the camels *were coming*:" Gen. xxiv. 6. "*Behold*, Rachel his daughter *cometh* with the sheep, and while he yet spake with them, Rachel came:" Gen. xxix. 6, 9. "They *saw him afar off*, even before he came near unto them, and they conspired against him to slay him. And they said one to another, "*Behold*, this dreamer *cometh*:" Gen. xxxvii. 18, 19. So Gen. xxxviii. 1. xxxvii. 25. xlviii. 2. Matt. xxi. 3.

7. "I KNOW YOU NOT."

1. The words that precede—"Verily I say unto you," are of solemn force. (1.) The Lord Jesus uses them, when he would lay the whole weight of his authority upon a truth, and by so solemn a sanction, preclude reply. (2.) He uses them where he is contradicting our expectations, or the common current of previous opinion: as where he declares with this emphasis, that the publicans and harlots entered the kingdom before the Pharisees; and where he asserts of that seemingly stedfast and massy pile.—the temple, that no stone of it should be left. (3.) He uses it where promises are made; pledging his word as to the fulfilment: and where sentence is passed, as on the sheep and goats. The use of it here, is to cut off reply on the part of the foolish virgins: and accordingly we find no answer made by them.

2. The words, "I know you not," as spoken by the bridegroom of the parable, signify in strictness,—"I have no *personal acquaintance* with you." And then the sentiment would be.—"This feast is for my personal acquaintance: you are none of these; therefore you must tarry without." And this is confirmed by the Scripture. For when David sends to Nabal on occasion of his making a feast for his sheep-shearers, requesting a portion for himself, the answer returned by Nabal is—"Who is David? and who is the son of

Jesse? there be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and *give it unto men that I know not?*" 1 Sam. xxv. 10, 11.

In the same sense is this word *οἶδα* used in the gospels concerning *personal acquaintance*. "*I knew him not*," says John the Baptist of Jesus. John i. 33. For though their mothers were known to each other, John was in the deserts till the day of his being presented to Israel. Now, these words of John were no moral rejection of Jesus: for he afterwards confesses him as the Lamb of God. The same word is employed where Peter denies that he had any acquaintance with Jesus. "I do not *know* the man." And the same word is used by all three evangelists: Matt. xxvi 72, 74. Mark xiv. 68, 71. Luke xxii 34, 57. So in the Old Testament. "Know ye Laban?" We know him." Gen. xxix 5. 1 Sam. xvii. 55. 2 Kings ix. 11.

3. Another word is employed (*γινωσκω*) when the question turns on the *character* of the party. "*I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.*" John v. 42. "Lord, *I knew thee to be an hard man.*" Matt. xxv. 24. "Then will I profess unto them, I never *knew* you." Matt. vii. 23.*

The latter is the expression which Jesus makes use of when he speaks as the shepherd—"I *know* my sheep, and am known of mine." John x. 14, 27. Had Jesus rejected these as not the sheep, they had indeed been unbelievers. Had he denied them as God, their doom for eternity were sealed. For, "If any love God, the same is *known of him.*" 1 Cor. viii. 3. And

* There is apparently an exception to this distinction between *οἶδα* and *γινωσκω* in Luke xii. 25. but it rather confirms it. The parties challenged by the Savior as unknown to him, claim *personal acquaintance* with him. "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets." But the Lord bids them depart as unrecognized, because evil in *character*. In Matt. vii. they plead the use of his name in miracle, and not *personal acquaintance*.

"The foundation of the Lord standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his." 2 Tim. ii. 19.

But how, it may be asked, does this observation apply in the present instance? The Bridegroom, you say, refuses admittance to the imprudent virgins, because they were no acquaintance of his; and the feast was intended for his personal friends only. Do you mean then, that Jesus purposes to give a seat at the marriage supper to *those only of his saints who have known him personally*? Certainly not. For the parable does not begin till Jesus had left the earth. And the seeing Jesus in the flesh or not is something which God arranged from the first by his all-wise disposal, and was no part of our choice. Therefore in *that*, prudence or imprudence could not be shown.—Nay, and Paul once for all puts it quite away. "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet, now henceforth know we him no more:" 2 Cor. v. 16.

The acquaintance here spoken of, is therefore spiritual. And the gifted are distinguished from the ungifted in this very manner. They are brought into a nearer acquaintance with God and Christ than the ungifted. For there are two ways of knowing any one: by *character*, or *personally*. We may know by character and admire and love, one whom personally we have never even seen. Or we may know a person familiarly, through constant personal intercourse, whose character we deeply disapprove. Or thirdly, we may both know by character and approve and love, one whom we know personally and by familiar intercourse. This is of course the most intimate knowledge, and we call it personal friendship. To personal friends a man unbosoms himself and makes known his secrets. "And Haman told Zeresh his wife, and all *his friends everything that had befallen him*:" Esth. vi. 13. See it exemplified again in the case of Jonathan and David: *the son hearing his father's secrets and then revealing them to his friend*. "Behold, my father

will do nothing either great or small, but that he will shew it me:" 1 Sam. xx. 2. "If it please my father to do thee evil, then I will shew it thee:" 12. "And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed David all these things:" xix. 7.

Now this was the glory of Abraham and the prophets.—"Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" Gen. xviii. 17. "The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, *as a man talketh with his friend*:" Ex. xxxiii. 11. "Surely the Lord God will do nothing but he *revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets*:" Amos iii. 7. Thus speaks Elisha, as one admitted to the Lord's secret things. "*The Lord hath shewed me* (concerning Hazael) that he will surely die." "*The Lord hath shewed me* that thou shalt be king over Syria:" 2 Ki. viii. 10, 13. And he complains of it in one instance that the Lord had not revealed his mind to him. 2 Ki. iv. 27.

Now while it is granted most fully, that to all and every saint there is but one way of approach—through the blood of Jesus Christ, it is still maintained that there is an intimacy of acquaintance attained by the gifted which is not reached by the ungifted, and which is here presented to us as the difference between personal knowledge and knowledge by character.

The gifted with tongues spoke "unto God" in a way inspired by his Holy Spirit, and peculiarly edifying, as bringing into most blessed nearness with God. He spake *mysteries of God*, as a friend speaking of the secrets of his friend: 1 Co. xiv. 2, 28. But especially is this true of prophecy. John the Baptist, the prophet, and more than a prophet, describes himself as the *bridegroom's friend*; (John iii. 29.) for the spirit of prophecy is one of peculiar and near witness to Jesus. Rev. xix. 10. The ungifted can know of God only by his *written word*; but to the prophet and inspired man, the Lord revealed himself directly, by vision, word, or inspiration, which is the privilege of an intimate acquaintance, who receives direct mes-

sages and revelations of his friends' intentions. To some Jesus even revealed himself personally as an object of sight: as to Paul, (Acts xxii. 14.) and to John, (Rev. i.) which as the nearest degree of intimacy, was the proof of apostleship. 1 Cor. ix. 1.

The prudent virgins and the personal friends are the same parties, for both points are essentially united to the same thing. They are prudent, because they take the gifts of the Holy Ghost with them, and it is through that foresight that they are admitted into the feast; and *the gift of the Spirit is the means of their introduction into nearness and intimacy of acquaintance or communication from God*. Thus they are personal friends, as to the present blessing of direct communication with God and his purposes; and they are prudent as to the attainment of future glory: whereas those who, while here below, slight the privilege of possessing the gift of the Holy Ghost, are shut out from a privilege on high. But their final acceptance seems certain. If they are believers waiting for Jesus, then their sleep is sleep in Jesus, and such, it is promised, that God will "bring with him." 1 Thess. iv. Only now the question is their *going to him*, not his *coming with them*, which is later than the other.

If the parable turned on the possession or not of *saving faith*, that word would apply—"The Lord knoweth,* (as to character) them that are his;" and on this ground, none but the workers of iniquity are rejected. 2 Tim. ii. 19. But it has been shown that all the virgins are believers, therefore that word does not apply: but the question is as to intimacy of personal acquaintance, to express which another word is employed,† and on this ground they are rejected who are not gifted by the Holy Ghost. And both these turn upon the operation of the Holy Ghost. Without regeneration by the Holy Ghost, all are unknown in the first sense: without the Spirit's gifts, all are unknown in the latter.

* εγνων. † οίδα.

8. MYSTERIES OF THE PARABLE.

Under this head also the deficiencies of the usual interpretation will appear, if we consider that the parables which the Lord propounds in his prophecy are *mysteries* of the kingdom, set forth to those to whom it was given to know them. Viewed in this light, where is the mystery of the Virgins? Its main lesson on the received interpretation amounts only to this;—"Take heed that you be converted, else you will have no part in the glory." But this, so far from being a mystery, was the first truth that the Savior taught Nicodemus, and marvelled that any could be a teacher of Israel and be ignorant of it. Failure here then is fatal; if in no other point did it seem to come short, this must condemn it.

What then are mysteries of the parable?

1. The Savior's departure from earth, so that his followers would have to look for his return as their constant attitude. This was novel to the disciples. All that the Lord had as yet openly foretold to them was his death and resurrection. Matt. xx. 17, 12. But this assumes as its starting point his departure from the earth, and sets the disciples in their position as the church of God, looking for him to appear as the bridegroom. But it also teaches that the bridegroom's return would be so long delayed, that a large portion of his church would be overtaken by death before his return.

2. The gifts of the Spirit were another mystery. John the Baptist promised them in veiled language: but they had not yet appeared. And after the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost they are only spoken of figuratively.

3. But there was yet another mystery. It was sad and grieving to God that the Jew should neglect the invitation to the kingdom; sad, that none of all the disciples of John or of Jesus ever asked Him, who was declared baptizer with the Holy Ghost, for the promised endowment. But that half of the children of light, of the elect of God, found asleep at the Lord's coming

should have neglected this glorious promise so freely made to Jew and Gentile at Pentecost, this was more sad and mysterious still !

4. There was likewise the mystery of the award. How would Jesus deal with those who neglect this great promise of the dispensation ? No passage but this informs us. Some, he had told us before, would hope to enter the kingdom because they had been possessors of the gifts of the kingdom. But they were set aside, because not regenerate : for "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." But what should be the case of those, who, being regenerate by the Holy Ghost, and in other respects walking consistently with their Christian profession, in this respect were found careless and unbelieving ? No word of Holy Scripture unravels this mystery but the parable before us. May it make the reader earnest to seek the oil before he falls asleep ! In concluding, I would leave upon his memory an apostolic *injunction*, which is superior to any thoughts about his privilege in the ruin of the dispensation, which as yet have held him back from praying for the gifts of the Spirit.— "Follow after love, and DESIRE SPIRITUAL GIFTS, BUT RATHER THAT YE MAY PROPHECY:" 1 Cor. xiv. 1.*

* If any desire to investigate this important subject further, they are referred to Govett's "Not Water Baptism, but the gifts of the Holy Spirit," &c. and "The Gifts of the Holy Ghost, connected with Justification by faith." Hamilton & Co.

APPENDIX.

NOTES FROM THE PICTORIAL BIBLE.

Matt. xxv. 1. "*Took their lamps.*" It appears from this and the whole narration that the Jewish nuptial processions took place by night, and by the light of *torches* or lamps. This is still the prevailing custom in the East, and was in ancient times also among the Greeks and Romans. Homer describes (Iliad xviii.)

"Rites matrimonial solemnized with pomp
Of sumptuous banquets. Forth they led the brides,
Each from her chamber, and along the streets
With *torches* ushered them, and with the voice
Of hymeneal song heard all around."

"*Went forth to meet the bridegroom.*" It is remarkable here that the Syriac, Persic, and Vulgate versions add, "and the bride." But this does not exist in any Greek copies except the Cambridge one of Beza's. Although the testimony of these versions, particularly the Syriac, is very valuable, we are not disposed to insist that they supply an omission in the Greek copies, it being quite sufficient for explanatory purposes if we find from this testimony that the authors of these versions, who were well acquainted with Oriental manners, understood the procession to be that of the bridegroom *and the bride*, that is, of the bridegroom conducting the bride home from her father's house. And this is the explanation we had been led to consider the most probable, even before we knew that it had the sanction of the versions we had named. It comports well enough with Oriental ideas to mention the procession as the bridegroom's, even when the

bride is present in it : there can be no doubt that the procession is that of the night in which the bridegroom fetches home his bride from the house of her father ; and the only question which can arise is, whether he is now described as proceeding to take her, or as returning with her : as the bride is not named, the *former* alternative is usually taken. But in this case the virgins must be supposed to have been in attendance on the bride, and for *these* or any women to go forth *to meet* the bridegroom and his male attendants would have been very contrary to those ideas of delicacy which the Orientals exhibit on such occasions. And moreover, it appears that the marriage entertainment, to which the foolish virgins in vain sought admittance, was held at the bridegroom's house, since it is he who takes upon him to answer the application which they made, and since the grand and final entertainment is and was held at the bridegroom's house after the bride was brought home. For these and other reasons too minute to state on a question of no great importance, but conclusive to one acquainted with Oriental manners, we feel satisfied that the procession was that of the bridegroom conducting home the bride.

10. "*The door was shut.*" The following from Ward's "View of the Hindoos," contains some points of illustration, although it rather alludes to the arrival of the bridegroom to take his bride than to his coming home with her. "At a marriage, the procession of which I saw some time ago, the bridegroom came from a distance, and the bride lived at Serampore, to which place the bridegroom was to come by water. After waiting two hours, at length, near midnight, it was announced, as if in the very words of Scripture, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh ; go ye out to meet him." All the persons employed now lighted their lamps and ran with them in their hands to fill up their stations in the procession ; some of them had lost their lamps and were unprepared, but it was then too late to seek them, and the cavalcade moved forward to the house of the

bride, at which place the company entered a large and splendidly illuminated area before the house, covered with an awning, where a great multitude of their friends dressed in their best apparel, were seated upon mats. The bridegroom was carried in the arms of a friend and placed upon a superb seat in the midst of the company, where he sat a short time, and then went into the house, the door of which was immediately shut and guarded by sepoys. I and others expostulated with the door-keepers, but in vain. Never was I so much struck with our Lord's beautiful parable as at this moment :—"And the door was shut !" I was exceedingly anxious to be present while the marriage formulas were repeated, but was obliged to depart in disappointment."

THE PARABLE

OF THE

TALENTS

EXPLAINED.

Third Edition.

THE
PARABLE OF THE TALENTS
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MATTHEW xxv. 14—30.

1. "For as a man that was going abroad, he called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.|| 2. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to each according to his several ability, and immediately went abroad.|| 3. Now he that received the five talents, went and traded (wrought) with them and made five other talents. In like manner also he that received the two, he also gained other two. But he who received the one, went off and digged in the earth, and hid away his lord's money.|| 4. Now, after a long time, the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.||

5. And he that received the five talents came to him and brought other five talents, saying, 'Lord, thou deliveredst to me five talents; behold I have gained beside them five other.' His lord said unto him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things; over many things will I appoint thee: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.'|| 6. Moreover, he that had received the two talents came to him, and said, 'Lord thou deliveredst unto me two talents; behold I have gained other two talents beside them.' His lord said unto him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, over many things will I appoint thee! enter thou into the joy of thy lord.'|| 7. Moreover, he that had received the one talent came to him and said, 'Lord, I knew thee, that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering whence thou hast not scattered. And I was afraid and went off and hid thy talent in the earth; lo, thou hast what is thine.' But his lord answered and said unto him, Malicious and slothful servant, didst thou know that I reaped where I sowed not, and gather whence I had not scattered? Though oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers (bankers), and at my coming I should have received mine own with interest. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it to him that hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he

shall have abundance ; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye forth the unprofitable servant into outer darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

The parable before us is divided, like the generality of those of St. Matthew, into seven parts. Of these the first four parts give us, as usual, the period of trial ; the three last, the period of recompence. The close, as being the most important to us, is the most expanded ; the first great division of the parable containing but six verses : the latter half, eleven.*

1. The connection between the former parable and the present is very strict. The Parable of the Talents commences with the word 'for,' which manifests, as I believe, its dependence upon the lessons of watchfulness with which the Lord concluded the history of the Virgins.

The Lord Jesus is the great centre in this parable, as in the former one. He is the "man going into a far country." The word represents Him as leaving one country or people for another. And even thus Jesus has left "this creation" for that which is unseen : Heb. ix, 11. He has left men for the society of angels : 1 Pet. iii, 22. The reason of the master's departure affects himself alone, and his servants do not go with him. Thus Jesus entered alone into the glory of God, His disciples being left behind.

The parable begins with the time after the Saviour's resurrection, and before His ascension ; for then the position which He held towards the disciples was that of one about soon to leave them : John xx, 17. Before His departure He assembles them, and commits to them

* The translators have inserted at the commencement the words "the kingdom of heaven is," but wrongly, for there is a good sense without them, which has been given above. But it is the need of a noun as the nominative to the verb "called," which has led me to believe that the words, "Wherein the Son of man cometh" in the former verse, are not (as many critics suppose) inserted by the copyists, but originally written by St. Matthew.

His goods. He calls "*his own* servants." By these are meant the disciples, as distinguished from the people of Israel, the professed servants of Messiah indeed, but rejecting Jesus personally.

In the Parable of the Pounds given by Luke (chap. xix) we see the connection of this economy with the kingdom. The nobleman is aware that he is about to receive a kingdom, and knowing that he will want governors to execute the offices of the kingdom, who must be persons worthy of trust, he bethinks himself of proving his own servants, to see if they are worthy to share with him the greatness and glory of empire. He is, in a manner, obliged to look for governors among his own household ; for his citizens hate him, and refuse to receive him as king. He puts the servants, therefore, upon their trial during the time of his absence, that he may perceive the degrees of their diligence and faithfulness at his return, and recompence them accordingly.

But though the parables of the Pounds and the Talents greatly resemble each other, they are by no means the same. In Luke, the same sum of a mina or the $\frac{1}{60}$ th of a talent is committed to each, and the returns are double those mentioned in this. The reason results from this very circumstance. For in Luke we have manifested, in the case of the faithful servants, the result of *diligence and ability combined* : while in this, differences of ability were considered and allowed for from the first, and therefore we have only the result of *fidelity* presented at length.

II. Having informed us that the householder divided his property among his domestics, we are next told in what proportions the distribution was made, and what was the principle on which it proceeded. The distribution divides the servants into three classes : those who had five talents,* those who had three, and those who had but one. The standard by which the distribution was regulated was the known ability of each.

* A talent of silver is in round numbers about £340. Jahn.

He who had the two talents, would not have been able to manage five. He who had the five could not have managed ten. The master knew the powers of each, and adapted his endowments to the capacity of the individual. Thus none could allege, as his excuse for unfaithfulness, that the burden was greater than his power would admit him to sustain. The intellectual differences being made equal at the outset, the result is a clear exhibition of the moral character of each.

But here a difficulty appears, which I will not dissemble. The parable supposes the distribution made before the master left. But the talents, in my view of them, were not given till after the Saviour's ascension. On this point I have but little to say, except that the difficulty presses far more heavily on the usual interpretation; and, still more especially, I add that the parable of the Pounds speaks of the departure *before* distribution.

But the question most important to the interpretation of the parable has yet to be asked. What is meant by the talents? To this the reply usually made is, that they signify the abilities and powers of glorifying God which each may possess. Or, more exactly, that by the talents are intended some or all of the following things:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| 1. Wealth | 4. Means of grace | { Powers of mind ; as
Intellect, &c.
Powers of body ; as
Health, &c. |
| 2. Station and
influence | 5. Personal qualities | |
| 3. Time, or Life. | 6. Office or authority
in the Church. | |

Now it can be shown that none of these are intended, by laying down some principles drawn from the parable itself.

1st. The things intended by the talents must be *something peculiar to Christ's disciples*; for it is only to "*his own servants*," that the master delivers his goods. By this test, therefore, we sweep away wealth, honor, time, intellect, health, and means of grace.

2nd. They must be something distributed *according to natural ability*. Then wealth, honor, intellect, health, time, and means of grace, do not answer to the condition supposed. The talents are distributed here to persons whose natural powers are foreknown and assumed: to *men*, not to *infants*.

3rd. They must be something possessed equally after the resurrection as before it.

4th. They must be capable of increase in kind, or be able to double themselves. This is not true of health, time, &c.

5th. They must be capable of being restored to the giver, and of being transferred to another. Hence means of grace, intellect, &c. are excluded.

6th. They must be something peculiarly Christ's gifts. For natural gifts make men in general responsible to *God*; but these bring under responsibility to *Christ*, as given to His previously acknowledged servants.

Nor is the thing intended, office or authority in the church of Christ.

1. For office does not produce office, as money makes money. Nor does authority double itself by exercise.

2. Nor is authority given to every one of Christ's servants; else all would be rulers, none servants.

3. Nor is it the ruling class of Christ's church alone, which the parable contemplates: for the expression "*his own servants*" includes many more than the rulers of the church of Christ.

Perhaps it may be said—'You must not take these things too strictly.' But if there be one thing which will fulfil the conditions of the parable, is it not first right to show that others will not, that we may the more clearly discern that that is the thing intended?

I believe, then, that by the talents the Saviour intends, the gifts of the Holy Ghost. These, it will be found, answer the tests given above.

(1.) They are peculiarly Christ's; given about the time of the Saviour's departure, and not possessed before. They were especially given to the called of God, and those obedient to His Son, who had taken on them the service of Christ at baptism: Acts ii, 38, 39; v, 32.

(2.) They are capable of being transferred from one to another, for we see that they were bestowed by the laying on of hands.

(3.) They were capable of increase in kind. "Let him that speaketh in a tongue, pray that he may interpret." "Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may *abound* (περισσευητε) to the edifying of the church:" 1 Cor. xiv, 12, 13.

(4.) They were bestowed, as far as we can see, according to natural ability. To Paul's natural powers are added equal spiritual powers. He is the first of the New Testament writers in power of thought and argument. Even in inspiration the ground of natural ability (which is also God's gift) is discernible.

(5.) The gifts of the Spirit will be possessed as much after the resurrection as before it. They lay the receiver under responsibility to Christ, and are to be employed not at the caprice of the flesh, but in service to the saints. "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each (εκαστω) to *profit withal*:" 1 Cor. xii, 7. Hence Paul once and again urges to diligence in the use of them.

(6.) They were given in consequence of Christ's departure, and could not be possessed before it (John vii, 37—39; xvi, 7), answering to the conditions of the parable; for the householder, it appears, would not have given up his goods to his servants, had he not been going abroad. And the spirit of prophecy is the ground of peculiar service; as we see in the expression several times repeated in the Revelation, "Thy *servants*, the *prophets*."

(7.) Moreover, as we find in the case of the slothful servant, the spirit of bondage and of fear is a hindrance to the right use of them: 2 Tim. i, 6, 7.

(8.) They take a very different symbol in the present parable, because of the different aspect in which they are presented. When viewed in connexion with the heavenly bridal, they are oil, displaying the requisite brightness and light. But here they are presented as money, in reference to *present use* and *increase to be made* in the deposit. In the Virgins they are regarded in their connexion with the believer's own advantage; here, in reference to the advantage of the Master. The former parable showed the separation, which would take place at length, between the gifted and the ungifted. But, lest any should think it enough to possess the gifts, and so become careless as to the use intended, the present parable discovers, that there will be a judgment of the gifted, on the question whether they have employed them with diligence and faithfulness for His service who gave them. By these two parables therefore, the position of the whole church of Christ, whether gifted or ungifted, is given; and the principles that will regulate its recompence.

It is very worthy of observation, that the sifting and testing principle in the parable of the Talents, is not the *suddenness* of the Master's coming, which forms the test in the former case of the Virgins. For as it regards the gifts of the Spirit, all are in readiness, all being gifted. The trial of the believer then becomes diligence in the use of gift, as a preparation for the coming of the Lord.

But to return. The gifting of the servants is the characteristic starting-point of the parable. It is assumed that they are believers. They are Christ's own servants. And the ground of discernment of their character, is their diligence or abuse in this special matter of gift. By the gifting, they are made stewards for Christ. "As each* hath *received the gift*, even so minister the same one to another, as *good stewards of*

* Εκαστος.

the manifold grace of God:" 1 Peter iv, 10. And where the gifts are spoken of as those of *Jesus*, they are described as bestowed by Him at His ascension. "But unto each* one of us is given grace according to the measure of the *gift of Christ*. Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and *gave gifts unto men*. . . . And he gave some (as) *apostles*; and some (as) *prophets*; and some (as) *pastors and teachers*; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all came in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:" Eph. iv, 7, 8, 11—13. The above is peculiarly important as offering to us, *Jesus as the giver of the gifts in connexion with His entering the heaven*—and the intent of the gifts, as being bestowed not for display, but for actual service to the members of His body. And, further, we gather that they were intended to last till the close of the church dispensation.

The division of the gift is stated as being made individually. "To *one* he gave five talents, to *another* two, and to *another* one." In close correspondence with this, is the account of the bestowal of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. "To *one* is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to *another* the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to *another* faith by the same Spirit; to *another* the gift of healing by the same Spirit. These all worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to *each severally as he will*:" 1 Cor. xii, 8, 9, 11. The individuality of the gift is noted in other places. Acts ii, 3; Rom. xii, 3; 1 Cor. iii, 5, 8, 10; iv, 5; 2 Cor. i, 22. The gifts are bestowed on them in their character of "servants." So is it seen accordingly in the passage first quoted on the point by Peter. "On my *servants* and on my handmaidens I

* Εκαστος.

will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:" Acts ii, 18. And we may find an allusion to the talent, as the wealth imparted by Christ, in the expressions: "*Enriched* by him in all utterance and in all knowledge:" 1 Cor. i, 5; and "*Treasures of wisdom and knowledge*:" Col. ii, 3.

III. By the servant that had received five talents, the *apostle* is meant, as I believe. His was the highest office in the church, "First, apostles:" 1 Cor. xii, 28; and the proof of apostleship was the exhibition of great and many gifts and powers: 2 Cor. xii, 12; Rev. ii, 2. Hence we read of the first of the servants, that he went (πορευθεῖς) and traded with the same. An apostle's commission was a roving commission. Not settled in any one place, he sought to set up churches where none existed before: Rom. xv, 18, 22, 24, 25; Acts xviii, 14; xviii, 6: xx, 22; xxii, 21.

The trading spoken of is the ministry of the gift unto edification of the church. And the same expression is used of the work of the ministry: 1 Cor. xvi, 10; 2 John, 8.

Now as the possession of the gifts entails much responsibility to Christ, therefore Paul stirs up to a diligent use of the heavenly endowment. "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word (utterance,) in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. *Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery*. Meditate upon these things: give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear unto all. Take heed unto thyself, and to the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee:" 1 Tim. iv, 12—16. And as though this were not enough, a similar exhortation follows in the next epistle. "*I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the*

putting on of my hands." And then is added an intimation of the great hindrance to the profitable exercise of it, which beautifully explains the conduct of the slothful servant here. "*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of sound mind:*" 2 Tim. i, 6, 7.

The possessor of five talents, by diligence, made them "*other five talents.*" And then thus it is taught in several passages of holy writ, that the believer might obtain more gifts than were bestowed at first, as well as employ those originally possessed, to the glory of the Redeemer. "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, *may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation* in the knowledge of him:" Eph. i, 17. "I long to see you, that *I may impart unto you some spiritual gift*, to the end that ye may be established:" Rom. i, 11. To the same effect are the passages quoted above.

The second, possessed of inferior gifts, was equally diligent, and he likewise doubled his original stock.

But the possessor of the single talent deserted the post given him. He *went off from* the scene of his duty, while the diligent servant *went to* it. The distinction of the two words is seen in a beautiful parallel case. Jesus sends forth the twelve to preach to the Jew. For them to go to the *Gentiles*, then, were to desert their commission. But to travel to the Jew, was the appointed sphere of their labour. "Into any way of the Gentiles *go not off*" (*απελθῆτε*); and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go (*πορευεσθε*) rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel:" Matt. x, 5, 6. Nor did he leave the appointed sphere of his duty only; he also hid away "*the money of the Lord*" in the earth. The talent is so called, to represent to us the breach of trust he was guilty of, in not applying the sum committed to him, to the purpose designed by the owner. *His own* money he might

thus have dealt with, but not the money of his lord.

The sketch of his proceedings seems to correspond very closely with that state of things in the early church, when so many left the society of their fellows, and, flying into the deserts, shunned communion, not only with believers, but even with mankind. For here we have an actual travelling away from the scene in which gift was bestowed, in order to shut it up from exercise, as truly as the first servant travelled on purpose to trade with the deposit entrusted to him.

IV. We are next informed of the Master's return, and of the reckoning which ensues. Here, as in the parable of the Virgins, is a period of delay and suspense, during the absence of the principal personage. But while both take in the period of the Lord's absence, the present parable begins earlier than the former. This begins immediately after the resurrection; the other, not till after the ascension; or, more closely still, not till after Pentecost, and the preaching of the Redeemer's return.

Account is rendered as soon as the Master returns. "We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall *give account of himself to God:*" Rom. xiv, 10—12. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they *that must give account:*" Heb. xiii, 17.

The master departed alone, but he returns with a new train of attendants. Thus the Lord Jesus returns as King of kings, and Lord of lords, and all His holy angels with Him.

It is observable, as proving that the scene of the judgment is in heaven, that the meeting of the master and servant is the result of motion on both sides. The master *comes*; and the servant *comes* to him likewise. This would suppose the descent of the Lord Jesus from

heaven, to answer to the first; and the ascent of the believer to meet the Lord, whether as the living and changed, or as the dead and risen saint, to answer to the second.

V. We have now arrived at the second great division of the parable, which treats of reward and punishment.

The servant on whom the greatest number of spiritual gifts had been originally bestowed, had employed them with holy diligence for God. Whether this be the meaning of the "other five talents," which he brought, I do not feel clear; or whether (as I am inclined to believe) he had received a double endowment of the manifold gifts of God.

In the parable of the unjust steward, the use of *natural* wealth is set forth, as here the management of *spiritual* riches. The use of natural wealth is there shown to be, not to *increase it by trade*, but to *give it away*, and to make friends by it for eternity.

The master receives him with words of praise, as "good and faithful," that is, loving towards his master's person, and diligent as regarded his interests. For his reward he not only holds the ten talents, but is bidden to "enter into the joy of his lord." By this I suppose is intended, the being exalted to reign together with Christ. First, because the joy presented to Christ was headship over all things in order to reduce them into obedience and subjection to God: Heb. ii, 7, 8; Phil. ii, 8—11; Heb. xii, 2. Secondly, because the reigning with Christ is promised in like manner to the diligent steward: Matt. xxiv, 47; Luke xii, 44. And in Luke the reward is set forth as power given over cities.

The commission of the little is rewarded by the bestowal of the great, the unconditional enjoyment of power and honor. And then authority will be an entrance into *joy*; not, as now, into *care*.

VI. We have next the reward of him to whom two talents were committed. He was equal in diligence, though not in ability, to the former servant, and

therefore he receives equal words of praise from the householder. As this is the time of *praise*, we learn that it is the period of our Lord's appearing: 1 Pet. i, 7. Both enter *into* the joy of the Lord. To be spectators of it from without, were joyful, but they *enter into* it as sharers and possessors of it in part. The Spirit's gifts are the "few things" in which they were found faithful. For these are "the first-fruits" and earnest of the kingdom: Rom. viii, 23. But they are only as the sheaf to the harvest that is to follow.

VII. The last scene unfolds to us the behaviour and destiny of the slothful servant.

He begins by accusing his lord. 'I was well acquainted,' he says, 'with your grasping character. I knew that you look for grain where you have no right to expect it; you require a harvest where you have sown no seed, and you are stern to exact it contrary to the rules of justice. I feared therefore to trade with this money, lest I should lose instead of gain by my adventure, and so bring myself under your displeasure and punishment.'

His fear is dread of *responsibility*. Some are afraid to speak or act for God, lest they should darken counsel by words without knowledge. And sloth teaches fear—it conjures up all manner of difficulties. "The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way: I shall be slain in the streets:" Prov. xxii, 13. He therefore returns the talent to his master as it was when he gave it.

But the lord is angry, and judges him on his own statement of the matter. Having praised the two former as "good and faithful," he now reverses this character. He was "malicious and slothful." He entertained as hard thoughts of his lord, as the others did kindly feelings; and hence these evil thoughts vent themselves in unfounded accusations, when the master appears. He blames the master as avaricious, even in the deposit of his talent. And he stands convicted of

falsehood ; for the master does not resume even the money which he deposited with the servants, but gives them both principal and interest, and bestows on the first the additional talent. So far is he from exacting, where he has not given, that he gives when he might demand. His sin then is threefold. First, his sloth. His sloth paints false pictures of his master, and these he credits, and hence sits down in idleness. And this ripens into the last act of evil ; his calumny against his lord in order to clear himself.

We are taught hereby, that the proper basis of service to Christ is love, while sloth and evil thoughts of Him go together.

His lord then proceeds to show, that, even on his own showing, he acted foolishly for his own interests, as well as unfaithfully to his master's.

'If I be so covetous and greedy of gain as you represent, why did not you seek to have something to present me with at my coming? If the fear of my displeasure so weighed with you, why were you not as anxious to win my approval? Your defence condemns you. You profess to fear my displeasure, and yet provoke it, by withholding my due where trust has been committed to you, and falsely accusing me to my face! And in answer to the fear you mention, that you might lose by adventuring the money in trade, I make reply, Was not the bank open? You might have handed the money over to those who would have kept it safely, and given me interest at my return. I should have required the money *thence*, and the risk would not have been yours.'

The money-changers or bankers of the parable are seen twice in the history of our Lord: John ii, 15 ; Matt. xxi, 12. They appear in the temple, when He cleanses it from merchandise. They were dealers in small coin, who changed foreign for Jewish money. Money was required of every Jew in the shape of atonement-money, or tithes and free-will offerings. These

dues could only be paid in the Jewish shekel, and not in foreign coin. To meet this demand, the money-changers set up their tables in the temple, and received a certain per-centage on the money changed. They also lent out money at interest.

But what is intended by this in the history before us? The statement of the master is, that if he feared to employ his money in adventure on his own part, he might have passed on the money to another. The banker guarantees to the lender of money a certain per-centage, less than can be obtained by prudent and diligent adventure, but free from risk to him who fears to trade with it himself. That therefore answers to the truth, that had the servant dreaded the responsibility of the gift, he might have transferred it to some other believer, who would have employed it for God : and then the gift had been exercised as intended for the glory of Jesus, instead of lying wholly idle and profitless.

Do not the exchangers of money here, answer to the oil-merchants in the parable of the Virgins? There is, however, necessarily a difference, arising from the nature of the two parables. The oil-merchants *sell* to one *that has not*. The bankers take the money from *one that has*. But this difference is easily reconcilable, for the *seller* of oil would be willing also on fitting terms to *buy* oil.

Angels are then addressed as executioners of the sentence upon the slothful servant. They are spoken of as "the by-standers," in Luke ; being not of the number of those whose case was then trying. They appear as spectators of the trial, and as carrying into effect the sentence of the Master. The talent is taken from the slothful one and given to the highest of the servants, and this constitutes his especial reward above the second. While both receive equal words of praise, and are alike welcomed into the joy of their lord, yet the first receives this as a pre-eminent reward.

This removal of the talent from the one, and trans-

ference to the other, is then justified. It is given to him that has most already : for this is the rule of God's recompence. "He that hath to him shall be given, and he shall have abundantly." It is the measure of God's dealings with us now in the bestowal of light and grace. It will be the rule of our reward hereafter. The diligent employment of what we have, will be followed by still increasing measures of strength, and light, and faithfulness. The same is presented to our notice in the other instance in which the principle occurs. The Saviour gave utterance to it when He delivered the first set of parables, as here He does in delivering the last. He speaks it there while expounding the first of the parables ; here in the end of the last parable that is addressed to His church. 'Those who have,' are believers in His name ; 'those who have not,' the evil, godless multitude that stood without. To the multitude He spake the parable ; for the saint He reserves the interpretation. 'Why speakest thou to them in parables ? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance ; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away, even that he hath : " Matt. xiii, 10, 11.

But the second part of his sentence follows. He was not only slothful and faithless, and therefore unworthy to be trusted ; but he wronged his master, and falsely accused him. He shall be cast out therefore into the outer darkness ; far from the light and glory of the master's presence.

What is meant by "the outer darkness," I do not understand, unless it be understood of the exterior of the city of light—the new Jerusalem : Rev. xxii, 15. By it is not, as I judge, meant Hadees (for that would be "the *inner* darkness," or "the *lower* darkness" (2 Peter ii, 4 ; Jude 6) ; but some place beyond and

without the region of Christ's presence and light.

There is a gradual advance in the heaviness of punishment in the three parables of Matt. xxv. In the first we have, as the reward, the entrance into the marriage-feast, and as its counter-part, the *shutting out* from a seat therein. In the present we have an entrance into the joy of the Lord, and as its counterpart of evil, a *casting out* into outer darkness. In the parable of the Sheep and Goats we have an inheritance of the kingdom ; and on the other hand, a departing into everlasting fire. The punishment increases according to the degree of the sin. The last is fixed and irreversible. The Saviour's lips have pronounced them "accursed," and who may unsay that fearful word ? But here the slothful servant is not pronounced cursed, nor do I think that his punishment is eternal. He is in *darkness*, not in *fire*. And darkness is the lot of angels, who yet, at the great day, will be set free : 1 Peter iii, 18—20 ; iv, 6. The loss of the virgins is owing to folly, and their recompence is a loss of especial glory. But the slothful servant is not only foolish as it regards his own interests, but blameable as it regards the trust committed by his master. As his fault therefore is greater, so is his punishment. But he is still from first to last, accounted the *servant*, and not the *enemy* of Christ. "Cast ye forth the unprofitable *servant*." It is just chastisement which is inflicted, and for the thousand years, as I suppose, but not final and for ever. And herein he stands distinguished from the virgins, who receive part in the thousand years, but lose the especial glory preceding it.

The slothful servant might have been a regenerate man, who, from the desire to give ease to the flesh, and to escape the troubles drawn down by the possession of the Spirit's gifts, fled from the post assigned him, and became worthless to the cause of the Lord, and to his testimony towards an evil world. It is possible for even the believer to be slothful, for he is cautioned

against it. “*Not slothful* in business ; fervent in spirit, serving the Lord :” Rom. xii, 11. “That ye be not *slothful*, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises :” Heb. vi, 12. And if we admit that “the Lord shall judge His people,” then the degrees of His disapproval and rebuke must, to a certain extent, resemble the doom of the wicked. Is there no lot short of damnation or full salvation? Is there not also such a case as the “suffering loss,” the “escape as through fire ;” and the “being ashamed before Him at His coming”?

In the darkness without is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Weeping, because of joy lost ; gnashing of teeth, because of vexation of spirit from the perception that the punishment suffered is justly deserved, and glory lost through their own folly and sin.

The separation of the gifted and ungifted, was the truth discovered by the parable of the Virgins. But lest any should imagine that the simple *possession of the gift is enough*, and that at once upon the reception of it we might dismiss all care, it is shown here to be the commencement of a new responsibility, for which account is to be rendered at the Master’s coming.

The present parable then is the JUDGMENT OF THE GIFTED, whether living or dead. The gifted are caught up the first (as we see by the former parable) to the presence of the Lord. But there the trial begins : and it is possible to be cast from that presence into the darkness without.

The parable of the Virgins displays the blessedness of the simple possession of the Spirit’s gifts, as it regards the *future need* of them. This teaches the needfulness of *present use* of them in order to the glory of Christ ; and the glory that will follow the right use of them in the Kingdom when come.

THE PARABLE

OF THE

SHEEP AND GOATS.

Second Edition.

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THIS passage of our Lord's discourse on Olivet is currently interpreted of the final judgment, in which it is supposed that men of every dispensation, the living and the dead, will receive their doom, and at the same time the earth will be burnt up. I take the statement given by the comment of the Religious Tract Society as affording exemplification of this. "We have here a most sublime description of the judgment day. There are some passages in it that are parabolical ; but there is no similitude carried through the discourse, therefore it is rather to be called a delineation of the *final judgment*, than a parable." "The judgment of the great day will be a *general judgment*. All must appear before Christ's tribunal ; *all of every age of the world, from the beginning to the end of time ; all, of every place on earth, even from the remotest corners of the world.*"

But against such a view there lie many and fatal objections, such as the following :—

1. The subjects of this judgment are "all the nations" (*παντα τα εθνη*). The word when plural is generally in St. Matthew's gospel (which is that for the Jews) and rightly translated, "Gentiles," iv, 15 ; vi, 32 ; x, 5, 18 ; xii, 18, 21 ; xx, 19, 25. And here also it would be rightly rendered—"All the Gentiles." As the same expression is in another place rendered—

"Praise the Lord *all ye Gentiles*:" Rom. xv, 11; Acts xv, 17. But in every case in which the expression is used, it signifies *divisions of living men*—"Ye shall be hated by *all the nations*." "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto *all the nations*:" Matt. xxiv, 9, 14; Acts xvii, 26; Rev. xii, 5. And the reason of this is evident, for at the resurrection the earthly and fleshly distinctions of nations cease among those that rise. And hence in the resurrection and judgment of the *dead*, there is no mention of "nations:" Rev. xx. But here no hint of the resurrection is given, and much less of the destruction of the earth by fire. I conclude, therefore, that this is the judgment of the *living* alone; the judgment of one of the three great divisions in which the sons of men are now regarded before God—"The Jews, the *Gentiles*, and the church of God:" 1 Cor. x, 32.

2. It cannot be the final judgment; for *that* is after the kingdom of the Son of man is past: *this* before it is begun—"Come ye blessed of my Father, *inherit the kingdom*." The kingdom here cannot be any kingdom after the destruction of the earth; for that is no kingdom of the Son of *man*. When death, the last enemy, is destroyed, Christ renders back to the Father the power He has received; His kingdom as Son of *man* closes, and *God* becomes all in all: 1 Cor. xv. And the final judgment is that of the *dead* alone, as this is of the *living* only.

3. It cannot be the final judgment; for Satan is not yet cast into eternal fire. It must, therefore, be the time when Satan is bound and cast into the bottomless pit, just before the commencing reign of Christ: Rev. xx, 1. It cannot be any time *after the thousand years*; for then, Satan having again deceived the nations of the earth, and thereby displayed his incurable malignity and crime, is cast into "the lake of fire:" Rev. xx, 10. But at the time contemplated by the parable it is only "*prepared for the devil and his angels*." It cannot be any time *before the commencement of the millennium*,

for till then Satan is free; (1 Pet. v, 8) and therefore the kingdom of peace and glory cannot be come.

4. That the church of Christ can have no part in this judgment is evident, for the following reasons:—

i. The first resurrection is of the *righteous alone*; the wicked dead not being raised at the same time: Rev. xx, 4—6. The raised saints are therefore a body by themselves, purely consisting of believers in Jesus; and therefore they do not answer to the assembly of the parable, which, when first brought before Christ, is composed of a *confused mixture of good and evil*.

ii. The rule of judgment to them that have heard Jesus' words and believe not, is different. "*The word that I have spoken unto him, the same shall judge him in the last day*:" John xii, 47, 48. But here is no question of faith, or of any word of Christ. The same standard of judgment, as the Scripture informs us, will not suit those that have lived under a revelation from God, and those who have not: Rom. ii, 5—16. But here one standard alone is applied.

iii. The time of the election of the righteous of the parable is not that of the church. The church was chosen in Christ "*before the foundation of the world*:" Eph. i. 4. The kingdom prepared for these was, "*from (or since) the foundation of the world*." (απο.)

iv. Another insuperable difficulty is introduced by this theory. How is it possible that the righteous should be *ignorant both of the judge and of his principles of decision*? "When saw we thee?" is their question. Then these cannot be believers; for it is written—"The world seeth me no more, but *ye see me*:" John xiv, 19. None of these can be the servants of the talents—"Lord, I *knew thee*." The question of each of these parties—"When saw we thee?" is an indirect denial that they ever had beheld the person who addressed them. So mighty a potentate they dare not flatly contradict—but they ask for an explanation. Now this could not be true of *all* believers in Jesus.

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Many believed in Jesus of those who saw Him, and some could not affirm that they had never seen His individual self hungry, and had relieved Him. Such a denial could not be made by "Mary, called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance : " Luke viii, 3.

This present judgment then, is not of those who own Jesus as Lord ; nor is the plea of the wicked the same as that given by the ungodly who have heard of Jesus and known Him : Matt. vii, 21—23. For the Saviour teaches that such, when desiring to enter into the kingdom, will plead *their knowledge of Jesus and their use of His name for prophecy and miracle*. Such could not be ignorant who is the personage seated on the throne of glory, nor be unaware that He accounts as done to Himself, the least kindness shown to a believer. Even the Jew was acquainted with the principle—"He that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord." But it is said—"Glorified saints will be filled with humble admiration to find such poor and worthless services so richly rewarded. Saints in heaven will wonder that God shall so regard them." This is wholly unfounded. The reply both of the righteous and the condemned presents simple *ignorance of the person of the judge*, and an implied denial of any former connexion with him. The answer informs them of the unknown *oneness* between himself, and his brethren whom he points out to them. As soon as this link of connexion between themselves and the King is pointed out, the one party is satisfied, and the mouth of the other is stopped.

v. Again, the judgment before us is one of *works*, without any reference to *faith*. But it is replied—"These works are the proof of faith working by love, and that love displayed towards Christ by kindness to His members." Now while this is true in general as it regards the believer in Jesus, it has no application here.

For the righteous did not know that in relieving the poor they were relieving Christ. How then could it be from love to Christ? They who did not know Christ's brethren—who did not know Christ—how could they have *faith* in Him? Rom. x, 14. He that knows God in Christ, must know and love His children. But Jesus points out to them the parties benefited as persons, known indeed personally as *men*, but *unknown in their relation to Himself*. "Ye did it to *these*"—they knew them as men—but they knew them not as "*my brethren*," and much less that their act would therefore be considered as done to Himself. Evidently, therefore, they are not justified by faith in Jesus. They are not His professed disciples, but some of the heathen "that have not heard His fame, or seen His glory." They are not one with Jesus, but His subjects. And even those condemned stand in an entirely different position from the enemies of the King, mentioned in the parable of the Pounds. *Those had known the King and willingly rejected Him*. "We will not have this man to reign over us." That supposed full *knowledge of the King*; this, an *entire ignorance of Him*.

vi. Were we to admit this as the judgment of those that know the name of the Lord Jesus, we should bring in an entirely new gospel. Dare we believe, that every one that has done a kindness, knowingly or ignorantly, to the people of Christ, will be saved?

In no parable is the necessity and beauty of rightly dividing the word of truth more apparent. For from this the Romanist argues for the merit of good works as the ground of salvation to the believer in Jesus ; to the overthrow, if possible, of the doctrine of justification by faith. "Works (they say) are to be done, because on account of these eternal life will be adjudged to the sheep. That they are *the meritorious cause of obtaining it*, is clear from the Judge's word—'Inherit the kingdom ; for I was hungry and ye gave me to eat.' The third party is the King's brethren. They

must be different from His subjects. They are not judged with this judgment. That is, the reason assigned, or the meritorious cause, (expressed by the word "for,") is their good works."

This consequence, Paræus, a learned Protestant commentator, denies. And how does he controvert it? He says—"With these six works of mercy, God is well pleased, but they must spring from faith and a true love to God, and our neighbour, and affection to the members of Christ. If from superstition or with a view of winning, by merit, the kingdom of God, or to lay God under obligation, or for ostentation of holiness, like the Pharisees, they are abominable."

And this were true, if the case adjudged in the parable were that of the Christian church. But when once we perceive of whom it is really spoken, the Romanist argument falls to the ground; nor are we obliged to add to the words of the Saviour to make them square with the elsewhere propounded principles of our dispensation.

vii. On the same supposition, an absurdity follows. If the assembly of the sheep contains all the just that have ever lived, and the goats all the wicked that have ever breathed, who are the *brethren* of whom Christ speaks? When the righteous inquire of Jesus, how they could ever have aided Him? and the Saviour in reply says, 'Ye have done it to these my brethren,' He *points out the sheep to themselves, if there is no third party*. But this is manifestly absurd.

The parties therefore described as "my brethren" cannot be among the righteous, for they are pointed out to the righteous, and the righteous are but one body. Nor can the brethren be among the wicked, for the Saviour speaks of them to the goats, as some body distinct also from them. *Therefore they must be some third party distinct both from the sheep and the goats.*

viii. Or we may state the argument in another form, thus—The Saviour presents before us, in both His judicial sentences, two parties—the one, the sufferers;

the other, the benefactors. Who then enter into the kingdom? *The benefactors who have relieved the wants of the sufferers*. But if the sufferers were being judged and a portion of the sheep, *they must be rejected as not having done any acts of kindness themselves*. But then again—How were this possible? If they were destitute of all means of rendering a kindness, being neither possessed of raiment, food, or a home, and deprived of liberty, how could they bestow any of these things on others? It is clear, therefore, either that the test is not a universal one, and fails as it regards a large class of those tried, or *else they are a third party who do not come under this trial*. Either the sufferers are shut out of the kingdom, and cast into eternal fire, though confessedly destitute of means to meet the conditions required, and though the Saviour acknowledges them as *His brethren*, to whom every kindness rendered is esteemed an obligation to himself; or else they do not come into this judgment; that is, they are a third party, distinct from both the sheep and the goats. *But the parties judged are all the Gentiles; therefore the brethren of Christ, distinct from both these, are the Jews*. And in confirmation of this we may add, that they have already been mentioned in this prophecy, as His elect gathered by angels from the four winds, or quarters of the earth; *therefore they are found scattered abroad co-extensively with the nations or Gentiles of whom they form the test*.

These remarks premised, we may enter directly upon the parable.

"Now when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all the Gentiles; and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd* divideth the sheep† from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left:" Matt. xxv, 31-33.

The whole parable takes its tone from the character

* Ο ποιμην. † Τα πρόβατα.

in which Christ is presented. In the Virgins He appeared as the Bridegroom; in the Talents, as the Lord of the servants; here, as "the Son of *man*." Now this title may teach us that the judgment of the parable is not one founded on resurrection, for Jesus takes the title "Son of *God*" in connexion with the rising of the dead. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of *God*: and they that hear shall live:" John v, 25. For the Father has given to Him to be essential life, even as He himself is. But as executing judgment He is "Son of *man*." "And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is Son of *man*:" John v, 27. Among the *sons of men* the brethren of "*the Son of man*" must be the Jews. It is in this character also that Messiah is presented to the Jews when He comes. "I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the *Son of man* came in the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages, should serve Him:" Dan. vii, 13, 14.

He "comes in His glory."

This is the King's solemn session on His throne after the armed and banded rebels have been cut off. One style of proceeding becomes the warrior against an army of foes, another the judge bringing law to bear upon the more secret evil-doers.

His coming now is the same that had been mentioned in a former part of this prophecy—"Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth (land) mourn, and they shall see the Son of man *coming* in the clouds of heaven with power and *great glory*:" Matt. xxiv, 30. These words and the preceding appear to give the return of the Lord Jesus as it affects the Jews; then the Saviour passes on to consider the state of the church as affected by His coming; and lastly, (in the present parable,) the consequences of His

appearing to the Gentiles or heathen nations, are drawn out.

He came in grace before, and answerably thereto He came in humiliation. But now He comes in glory, in power, and exaltation. He comes in glory, for a kingdom and its glory should be closely connected; and the glory exhibited is the proof of the kingdom come.

But Jesus has a twofold glory, earthly and heavenly. And in the heavenly glory there is a twofold division. He has angelic glory, as the head of angels; and the glory of the Son of God, as head of the Church. He has also a twofold *earthly* glory, as the Son of *David* or head of the *Jews*; and as the Son of *man*, or head of *mankind in general*. His threefold glory is pointed out in the following text. "He shall come in *His own glory*, and *His Father's*, and of the *holy angels*:" Luke ix, 26. In Jesus will be blended the glory of the celestial and of the terrestrial; for in Christ heaven and earth are to be united: Eph. i, 10. The present is His glory as Son of man, or His earthly glory, such as it was displayed on the Mount of Transfiguration: Luke ix, 32, and of the kind that Moses bore upon his countenance, when he descended from Mount Sinai: 2 Cor. iii, 7.

"And his holy angels with him."

Angels were the ministers of the Jewish dispensation; they are now subjected to Jesus. "Thou hast put *all things* under His feet." Nay, they worship Him. "When He again bringeth in (παλιν εισαγαγη) the first-begotten into the habitable earth (οικουμενην) he saith, Let all the angels of God worship Him:" Heb. i, 6. They are the great agents in purifying His kingdom. "The Son of man shall send forth *His angels*, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all stumbling-blocks (σκανδαλα) and them which do iniquity:" Matt. xiii, 41.

"Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory."

Heaven is the place of *God's* throne:" (Matt. v, 34,)

and earth the place of *the Son of man's* : Psa. cxv, 16. And its immediate locality is Jerusalem. "*Jerusalem* is builded as a city that is compact together : for there are set *thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David* : " Psa. cxxii, 3, 5. " In that day they shall call *Jerusalem the throne of the Lord*, and all the nations shall be gathered to it to the name of the Lord to Jerusalem : " Jer. iii, 19. " I will raise unto David a righteous Branch and *a King shall reign* and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice *in the earth* : " Jer. xxiii, 5.

Jesus is now seated on the throne of His *Father, even God*. But He will come one day to sit on the throne of *His father David*. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on *my throne*, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on *His throne* : " Rev. iii, 21 ; Heb. viii, 1 ; xii, 2. "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His *father David* : " Luke i, 32, 33.

It is the "*throne of glory*." And this is connected with Israel. "In the regeneration, when the *Son of man* shall sit on the *throne of His glory*, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones *judging the twelve tribes* of Israel : " Matt. xix, 28. And we have seen that these twelve thrones are at Jerusalem, whither the tribes go up : Psa. cxxii. The throne promised to David's seed is to be "*as the sun* : " Psa. lxxxix, 36. No wonder, therefore, that it is called "*the throne of glory*."

It is the throne foretold in the law : Deut. xvii, 18. And, as it is written concerning the King that is to occupy it, that he is to be one chosen by the Lord, and one of the sons of Israel, "one from among *the brethren*," therefore does the King in the parable confess Israel as his "*brethren*." "Thou shalt in any wise set him King over thee whom the Lord thy God shall choose ; one from among *THY BRETHREN* shalt thou set King over thee, thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is *not thy brother* : " Deut. xvii, 15.

"And before him shall be gathered all the Gentiles."

This is the judgment of the Gentiles after the time of mercy is past, when justice comes forth unto victory, as it is written—"Behold my servant whom I uphold ; my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased ; I will put my spirit upon him, and *he shall show judgment unto the Gentiles* : " Matt. xii, 18. And as Matthew alone gives the parable, he alone cites the prophecy that refers to it.

There is another assembly of Gentiles at Jerusalem, but that is a voluntary going up thither, and for battle. On *that* the wrath of the Redeemer descends openly, and without form of trial : Mic. iv, 11—13 ; Zeph. iii, 8 ; Zech. xii ; xiv ; Rev. xvi, 14.

But this gathering is for calm judgment on principles of justice. The assembly is involuntary, and is collected by angels. The nations live far apart, but the angels will gather them together, and bring them down "*into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and I will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land* : " Joel iii, 2. Here Israel is called "*my people*," and "*my heritage* ; " as in the parable, the third party, distinct from the sheep and goats, are called "*my least brethren*."

"And he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats."

There are three flocks belonging to Jesus ; one heavenly, and two of earth. The heavenly flock is the church. But, beside these there are the flock of Israel and the Gentile flock. The heavenly flock and the heavenly shepherd are set before us in John x. They are distinguished from Israel by their hearing the voice of Jesus now, by their knowing it and following Him, and entering into the fold by Him, during the time that Israel rejects Messiah. The same characteristics also distinguish them from the flock before us, who,

it is evident, are wholly ignorant of Him. The heavenly flock know Jesus as the "Son of *God*," and worship Him as such : John ix, 35 ; x. But here it is the flock of the Son of *man*. The flock of the parable may be, as I think, alluded to in the Saviour's words—"And other sheep I have, which are not of this *fold* : (*αυλη*) them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one flock (*ποιμνη*) one shepherd : " John v, 16. It seems to be commonly supposed that by those "not of this fold," Gentile believers are meant. *But in the Church of Christ both Jew and Gentile are one, and both of one fold, when united by faith to Christ* : Eph. ii, 14. Moreover, the character given of the sheep is heavenly, and in no respect are they marked as Jews. Therefore the sheep "not of this fold" who "shall hear" the voice of Jesus, may be, I believe, the earthly sheep of the Gentiles, who believe in Him *at His appearing*. The second flock of Jesus is the flock of *Israel*. And hence He is addressed in the Psalms as "*the shepherd of Israel*, that leadeth Joseph like a *flock* : " Ps. lxxx, 1. This is the flock of "the Lord God of Israel : " Jer. xxiii, 1—8. In this view Israel is distinguished from the nations, and stands alone. "Hear the word of the Lord, *O ye nations*, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattereth *Israel* will gather him, and keep him *as a shepherd doth his flock* : " Jer. xxxi, 10. This is the flock of Messiah as *Son of David*, and is therefore distinguished from the flock which Jesus holds as *Son of man*.

We have a view both of the Jewish and of the Gentile flock, as I think, in Ezek. xxxiv. In that chapter Jehovah denounces, first the shepherds of Israel for their selfish regard of themselves, and carelessness as to the flock, the consequence of which is their being scattered abroad everywhere. Such was the case, in part, at the Saviour's first advent : Matt. ix, 36. But at this time Jesus will resume His power as shepherd, and take it away from the rulers of Israel. "For thus saith the Lord God : Behold I, even I will both search

my sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered ; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel : " Ezek. xxxiv, 11—13.

But another flock seems next to be addressed, which are to be *judged* and *separated*, like the flock of the parable. "And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord God : Behold I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and he-goats. Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of the good pasture, and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet ? And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet, and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God unto them : Behold I, even I will judge between the fat cattle, and between the lean cattle. Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad. Therefore *will I save my flock, and they shall be no more a prey : and I will judge between cattle and cattle* : " Ezek. xxxiv, 17—22.

The judgment proceeds upon the same ground as that of St. Matthew, viz., their behaviour towards the flock of Christ. And what the "small cattle" (*שׂה*) of Ezekiel are, is explained by the Saviour to be "sheep" and "goats."

The elect living Gentiles are presented as the flock of the Son of man, if I mistake not, in the hundredth Psalm. "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord *all the earth*. (Marg.) We are His people, and the *sheep of His pasture* : " 1—3.

There will in that day be *two folds** (*αυλαι*) though but *one flock* (*ποιμνη*.) There will be one portion of the elect *in heaven*, and one *on earth*; but they will be but one flock, tended by the same "great Shepherd of the sheep."

But to return to the flock with which we are immediately engaged. While the shepherd is away, the flock is intermingled. As in the wheatfield, wheat and tares grow together till the harvest; so the two flocks of sheep and goats feed together till the Shepherd Son of man returns to sever them. With extreme ease does he separate the two classes, as easily as a shepherd detects the difference between a sheep and a goat, and acts upon that perception. The two companies will be found classed according to their *natures*, as the seed of the woman or the seed of the serpent. This marks the omniscience of Jesus as the judge of men. He decides not, as in the case of the armies of Antichrist, on their *attitude and action* at the time he appears. He delivers sentence on their known difference of *nature*. He needs no inquiry into evidence, like other judges; but on His own instant knowledge of their dispositions He delivers judgment. He first makes the division, and then justifies it. This is not the final judgment of the dead: Rev. xx. *There* books are opened, and the dead are judged out of the books. But *here*, the glance of the shepherd suffices to detect, and separation is made between the justified and the lost.

"He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left." The division is made before sentence is passed. In this momentous separation and judgment, the first *Adam* seems to have been a type of the second. "Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the heaven; and *brought them unto Adam to see what he*

* This may seem to contradict John x, 16, but it only appears to do so; for the second word rendered "fold," signifies a company or flock of sheep; but not the place in which they are assembled, as *αυλη* does.

would call them; and whatever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof:" Gen. ii, 9. Thus before Jesus, as second Adam, are brought a nobler flock, and He decides at a glance, which shall be accounted sheep, and which goats.* And whatever designation He gives to them, whether "blessed" or "cursed," that they retain for ever.

The right hand, as the place of honour (1 Kings ii, 19; Psa. cx, 1) is assigned to the saved. And if this judgment takes place in the valley of Jehoshaphat, and His throne be on Olivet—then those on His right hand will stand over against Jerusalem; for "on the north side lieth the city of the great King." Those on the left hand, on the contrary, stand in fearful nearness to Tophet, the valley of the Sons of Hinnom, where is the fire of the lost: Isa. lxvi. And how appropriate a place for the delivery of this parable was the Mount of Olives, looking down upon the very place of the future judgment!

"Then shall the King say to them on his right hand—Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

II. In this second division of the *parable* (though it is perhaps scarcely exact to call it by that title) it is interesting to notice the strong confirmation given to the preceding interpretation by the words—"Ye blessed of *my Father*." Those justified by faith have God for "*their Father*." "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of *their Father*:" Matt. xiii. Nor does Jesus use the expression "*the Father*," for this would be unintelligible to those who

* In Heb. *שְׂעִירִים*—which also signifies "devils:" 2 Chr. xi, 15. The goats are punished when Israel is made God's goodly horse in the battle: Zech. x, 3. *שֵׁעִיר* also, or Seir is the name of Esau, the type of the profane and reprobate: Mal. i, 2.

had never heard of *the Son*, or the Holy Ghost. But they could understand the words "*my Father*," as giving the relationship in which some personage unknown stood to the King before them. But not thus is it with the church—"Grace and peace from God *our Father*:" Rom. i, 7, etc. As we are sons, God hath "*blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies*:" (Eph. i, 3,) and we were "*chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world*:" 4. But these are blessed with *fleshly blessings in earthly places*; and were chosen "*from the foundation of the world*."

It is observable also, that Jesus does not call the kingdom, into which they enter, "*the kingdom of heaven*," though that is the constant expression in St. Matthew. Nor is it indeed to them the kingdom of *heaven*, in the sense in which it is to the church. It is to them the kingdom of heaven only in so far as their rulers are dwellers in heaven, and its principles and Head are heavenly. But the kingdom which is given to them is the kingdom of *earth*, and dominion over its animated races. This was the dominion given to Adam from the foundation of the world. "And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them *have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth*." "And God blessed them, and God said unto them—Be fruitful, and multiply, and *replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth*:" Gen. i, 26—28..

But this is not the "*kingdom which God hath promised to them that love Him*:" for the others are not "*rich in faith*:" James ii, 5. Nor is it the "*inheritance of them that are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus*:" Acts xx, 32. Nor is it the "*inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, reserved in*

heaven:" 1 Pet. i, 4. The saint's heirship is this, that if found victorious he "*shall inherit all things*." But the earth, the heritage of these, is burned up and utterly destroyed by fire, after the thousand years.

A hint of this double inheritance and scene of the kingdom is given in the memorable promise to David's Son. "And it shall come to pass when thy days be expired, thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, and shall be of thy sons, and I will establish *his kingdom*. He shall build me an house, and I will stablish *his throne* for ever."

"I will be his father and he shall be my son: and I will not take away my mercy from him, as I took it from him that was before thee; but I will settle him in mine house and in *my kingdom* for ever; and *his throne* shall be established for ever:" 1 Chron. xvii, 11—14. In the first part it is "*his kingdom*," in the second it is "*my kingdom*," and "*his throne*" is in both.

1. There are *three* distinct yet harmonized divisions in the kingdom of Messiah. The sphere of the first is *the earth generally*, and its blessing is to replenish the earth, subdue it, and have dominion over its animated races. This is the kingdom which Adam once held, and lost. And it was prepared at the foundation of the world for man; but through sin's entrance not inherited till now; and inherited only through mercy by those favoured ones, whom we may call the earthly elect of God.

2. The second department is occupied by *the Jew*, and its sphere is the *land of Canaan*. The time of its first promise was when the covenant of circumcision was given to Abraham—"Kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, *all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession*; and I will be their God:" Gen. xvii, 6—8. Thus, while the Gentiles rule the *earth*, and its *animated tribes*, the Jew, as it

appears, rules the *Gentiles*; as it is written—"Kings of nations shall be of her:" verse 16. And again—"The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish:" Isa. lx, 12. And again—"And the peoples (עַמִּים) shall take them and bring them to their place; and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives whose captives they were, and they shall rule over their oppressors." And, it was the curse of their disobedience—"They that hate you shall rule over you:" Lev. xxvi, 17; so the blessing of their law is—"Thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee:" Deut. xv, 6. And in Solomon's day, which was the shadow of the coming kingdom, Israel in his person, ruled over kingdoms: 1 Kings iv, 21. The Gentiles' jealousy at this superiority and dominion of the Jew is, I believe, the motive of the last great war of Gog and Magog.

3. But there is yet a third and loftier department of the kingdom, the inheritance "reserved in heaven," attained only by putting on immortality. This is the kingdom of the *Father*, "the kingdom of God:" 1 Cor. xv, 50. The great centre of this is the New Jerusalem, whence blessings flow to earth.

The sphere of dominion exercised by these, the risen saints, is joint heirship with Christ in *all things*: Rom. viii, 17.

Jesus addresses the sheep as "the King." He is "*the great King*," and Jerusalem is His great city: Matt. v, 35. He is at once King of men and "King of the Jews:" 2 Sam. xxiii, 3; Matt. ii, 2. The latter title He boldly confessed before Pilate, in spite of the ridicule and the danger attached to its assumption. "Thou art the King of the Jews?" said Pilate, in a question of cutting irony. "And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest."

The Lord Jesus then proceeds to state the grounds on which He has assigned to His earthly elect, a place

at His right hand. It is because of natural kindness rendered to himself, under the necessities common to man's hunger, thirst, strangeness in a foreign clime, nakedness, weakness, imprisonment. None of the higher cases of aid are mentioned. No word is dropped of edification of the spirit, of conversion, of the preaching of the Gospel. On the present interpretation this is accounted for: on any other supposition it is not to be explained. And as earthly acts of kindness are rendered by these elect ones, so do the earthly blessings of the kingdom requite them; fulness of bread, plenty of corn and wine and oil, possessions in their own land, durable clothing, health, long life, and the full enjoyment of freedom.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, 'Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? And when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick or in prison, and came unto thee?' And the king shall answer and say unto them, 'Inasmuch as * ye did it unto one of these my least brethren, † ye did it unto me:'" 37—40.

Some fancy they can see in this reply of the righteous an indication of humility, and astonishment, that

* Some have said—εφ' ὅσον should be rendered—"To the extent that"—But no; see Rom. xi, 13.

† This variation of rendering is important. Thus Beza, the Vulgate, Wickliff, and the Rhemish Testament give it. Much turns on whether it be—"the least of these my brethren," or "these my least brethren." The present rendering is according to the usual rule: the authorized translation is a departure from it. *Ενὶ τούτων των ἀδελφῶν μου των ελαχίστων.* Where the adjective (in translation) is to follow the substantive, the order of the words is as here. Thus ο υἱος μου ο ἀγαπητός. "My beloved son:" Matt. vii, 7. Ο πατήρ μου ο ἐπουράνιος. Matt. xv, 13. "My heavenly Father." But especially opposite is Matt. v, 19. *Ὅς εἰαν οὖν λύσῃ μιαν των ἐντολῶν τούτων των ελαχίστων.* Which is justly rendered "One of *these* least commandments," not "one of the least of these commandments." So also Phil. iv, 1; Rev. ii, 13; iii, 12. If otherwise, it had been—*ἐνὶ των ελαχίστων τούτων*, etc.

works so poor as theirs should be rewarded so richly. But the tenor of the reply is quite different. Not a word is said concerning the *comparative merit of the works and the reward*, but only surprise is expressed at *the person who professes himself benefited*. They never saw him before; how can they have shown kindness to him? The answer of the king confesses that they had never before beheld him: only he graciously imputes as done to himself, what was done to those related to him in the flesh. Such ignorance, both of the person that judges, and of the ties that knit Him to the Jews, cannot belong to the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

But Jesus declares that their kindness to "one of His *least* brethren," He esteems as done to himself. Now there are three kinds of brotherhood presented in the New Testament, and thus the superlative "least" is accounted for. The first is that which is produced by the regeneration of the Holy Ghost, and oneness with Jesus in the Spirit. The second and less relationship to Jesus is the being born of the same parent. You have both these kinds compared together, and the pre-eminence given to the first brotherhood in a well-known passage of the Gospels. "While He yet talked to the people, behold His mother and *His brethren* stood without, desiring to speak with Him. Then one said unto Him, Behold thy mother and *thy brethren* stand without desiring to speak with thee. But He answered and said unto him that told Him, Who is my mother? and who are *my brethren*? And He stretched forth His hand towards His disciples and said, Behold my mother and *my brethren*! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, *the same is my brother*, and sister, and mother:" Matt. xii, 46—50. The third and lowest degree of brotherhood is *the being one of the same nation*. "And when He was full forty years old it came into His head to visit *His brethren the children of Israel*." "For He supposed *His brethren* would have understood how that God by His hand

would deliver them:" Acts vii, 23—25; Rom. ix, 3. It is of the last relationship, therefore, that the Lord Jesus speaks, for that is the least of the three, and thus it is manifest that the parties pointed out are the Jews. Hereby Jesus fulfils the law, which requires of the king of Israel that "*his heart be not lifted up above his brethren*:" (Deut. xvii, 20) for he owns them in their low and fallen estate.

For what is the condition of the Jews at the return of Messiah? There shall be "wrath upon this people. And they shall *fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all the nations*, (or 'Gentiles;') and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the *Gentiles* until the *times of the Gentiles* be fulfilled:" Luke xxi, 23, 24. "For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled:" 22. Then will be accomplished the curse of the law—"The Lord shall scatter thee *among all peoples* (עַמִּים) from the one end of the earth even to the other." "And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest; but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind. And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life." "Ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you:" Deut. xxviii, 64—68.

But while this will be their general treatment in their last great captivity, the Lord will dispose the hearts of His earthly elect to show them kindness. "He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives. Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from the heathen, (or 'nations'—גוֹיִם) to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise:" Psalm cvi, 46, 47. Ezek. vi, 8, 9, refers (with many other passages) to the same time; see Jer. i, 33, 34.

From these and many declarations of a similar

character, it appears, that just before Messiah's coming, the Jews are carried captive into all lands, and, therefore, the present test is aptly proposed to men. As captives, all these wants and necessities may well oppress them. And critically accordant with this is one of the conditions which the Saviour specifies as relieved by the just—"I was a *stranger*, and ye took me in." Hunger also and thirst, nakedness, sickness, and imprisonment, are just the calamities which would be likely to overtake the plundered, and hated, and overdriven captives of Israel. But those whose hearts are touched of God, stand forth as exceptions to their nation, in showing them kindness. They are, I judge, the parties raised up to believe in God, by the preaching of the angel, in Rev. xiv—"And I saw another angel flying in the mid-heaven, (*μεσουραννημα*,) having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, *Fear God*, and give glory to Him ; for the hour of His judgment is come ; and *worship Him that made heaven and earth*, and the sea and the fountains of waters : " ver. 6, 7. Now this is not the gospel *sent to us* : for in it is no mention either of Jesus or the resurrection ; and both those topics are addressed to the Athenians while listening for the first time to the gospel as sent to us : Acts xvii. But this is just such a message as would be sent to the heathen worshipping wood and stone. All those who receive the angel's tidings manifest their fear of God by their kindness to God's earthly people ; just as the believer now manifests his love to God by his kindness towards the heavenly people. For the Jews, as worshipping the God of heaven and earth alone, (Jon. i, 9,) would be special objects of sympathy to these believers in one God.

The rule of judgment towards the heathen nations at the coming of Christ, will be the principle which God laid down at His first choosing of Israel. The

two great parties before us are pronounced "blessed" or "cursed," in conformity with the words of Jehovah to Abraham—"I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee : " Gen. xii, 3. The same principle was set forth as a part of the blessing of Jacob or Israel, by the Spirit of prophecy, which rested on Isaac. "Let peoples (*עַמִּים*) serve thee, and nations bow down to thee : be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee : CURSED BE EVERY ONE THAT CURSETH THEE, AND BLESSED BE HE THAT BLESSETH THEE : " Gen. xxvii, 29. That the acts of the individual Gentile towards the Jew should be decisive of the blessing or the curse, appears yet more remarkably in the history of Balaam. In his day Israel and the Gentiles came into collision ; and Balak sought by his means to curse Israel, and thus reverse the mind of God and His promises. But after several fruitless efforts, his opposition to Israel is borne back, and he is constrained to bless. As he takes leave of Balak, he says, "Come, therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people *in the latter days*." And in the prophecy which just precedes these words, he re-affirms the very same principle cited above—"How goodly are thy tents O Jacob, and thy tabernacles O Israel BLESSED IS HE THAT BLESSETH THEE, AND CURSED IS HE THAT CURSETH THEE : " Num. xxiv, 5, 9, 14. And in his concluding strain of prophecy, he foretells to the Gentiles the Star out of Jacob, and the Sceptre that is to arise out of Israel : 17. Thus we have both the principle and its relation to the coming of our Lord, in the most remarkable interview that ever occurred between Israel and the nations. This is the scene presented in Psalm xxxvii. It treats of those who are to possess the earth. And while it confesses that the proud and strong and wicked were then prospering, it promises that the meek and the gentle shall one day possess it, when the wicked are cut off. "Yet a little while and the wicked shall not be, yea thou shalt

diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace :” 10, 11. The character of those who are to possess the earth is described as merciful, the wicked as of the contrary temper ; which is the distinction insisted on in the parable. “The wicked borroweth and payeth not again ; but *the righteous showeth mercy and giveth*. For SUCH AS BE BLESSED OF HIM SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH, AND THEY THAT BE CURSED OF HIM SHALL BE CUT OFF :” ver. 21, 22. Here we have the very sentence of the parable ; and it is passed upon the grounds above stated.

Again—“He is *ever merciful and lendeth*, and his seed is blessed. Depart from evil and *do good*, and dwell for evermore. For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not His saints, (חסידיו) ; they are preserved for ever ; but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. *The righteous shall inherit the earth*, and dwell therein for ever :” 26—29. “Wait on the Lord and keep His way, and *He shall exalt thee to inherit the earth ; when the wicked are cut off thou shalt see it :*” 34.

These are also, I believe, the parties addressed in Psalm cxv, immediately after the mention of Israel—“The Lord hath been mindful of us, [Jews,] He will bless us ; He will bless the house of *Israel* ; He will bless the house of *Aaron*. He will bless them that fear the Lord, [the Gentiles in question,] both small and great. The Lord shall increase *you*, [Gentiles distinguished from us] more and more, you and your children. *Ye are blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth :*” ver. 12—15. Thus the Jews instruct the Gentiles who have been blessed by Jesus, as to the Divinity of Him who pronounced on them the blessing.

If the judgment before us be so understood, there is in it a remarkable agreement with God’s dealings of old. Thus Pharaoh, King of Egypt, is plagued because of his offence against Abraham’s wife, *even though ignorantly committed* : Gen. vii, 14. The kings that

spoil Lot, Abraham’s nephew, are themselves spoiled. Abimelech is hindered from touching Sarah, else he had been cut off : Gen. xx. Hagar and Ishmael are cast out for persecuting his seed. Blessing falls on Laban, because of Jacob’s coming ; the withdrawal of it follows, because of his injustice to Jacob : Gen. xxxi. Potiphar’s house is blessed because of Joseph’s presence ; and the whole kingdom of Egypt for Joseph’s sake. Egypt is plagued, and Pharaoh destroyed, when their counsel concerning the children of Israel is changed. For the cruelty of Amalek against Israel that nation was to be cut off. And *the neglect of Ammon and Moab to assist Israel with bread and water, is avenged by their not being suffered to come into the house of the Lord for ten generations* : Deut. xxii, 3, 4. A specimen of a like discrimination with that of the parable is observable, when God sends the king of Israel against Amalek. “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which *Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt*. Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all they have, and spare them not ; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass :” 1 Sam. xv, 2, 3. But in the execution of this judgment some were to be *saved* and *on the same principle*. “And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them ; *for ye showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites :*” 6.

We may also look at the principle of the judgment in a moral point of view. Then the saved are blessed according to a principle of the New Testament—“*Blessed are the merciful*, for they shall obtain mercy :” Matt. v, 7. And the lost are cursed according to another principle—“*For he shall have justice without mercy, that showed no mercy* : and mercy rejoiceth (or ‘boasteth’) against judgment :” Isa. ii, 13.

It is a dictate even of the natural conscience to do

good to those that need it, to give food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, and clothing to the naked. But while none are justified thereby of right, these are, by the special application of a principle of God's revealed mercy, promised to Abraham. Thus all the saved come in for a portion of the unconditional grace promised to Abraham. Believers in Jesus, as his spiritual seed; the Jew, as the descendant of the patriarch after the flesh; and the saved of the heathen, as benefactors of the literal Israel; and thereby God's mercy in Christ is graciously imputed to them. Thus, though they are not believers in Jesus, *yet are they brought as nearly as possible into the place of those who are.* They are saved by *imputed righteousness*. Their acts of kindness toward the Jew are reckoned as done to the Saviour, through His brethren after the flesh. And therefore of His royal bounty, He bids them, as the elect of His Father, enter the kingdom. Jesus is to them, as He is to the Jew and the Church, the turning point of salvation.

But observe the distinction between the doctrine concerning reward presented to them, and that held forth to the Church—"Whosoever shall give you a cup of cold water to drink *in my name because ye belong to Christ*, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward:" Mark ix, 41. The believer's kindness is accepted *when it springs from the knowledge of Christ's oneness with His people, and love to them, because they are His.* But the kindness here manifested was *in entire ignorance of Messiah, and of the relation in which the Jew stands to Him.* For while they have faith in God, as it is written, "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him:" (Heb. xi, 6,) of Jesus they have not heard, and so cannot believe in Him.

"Then shall he say to those on the left hand--'Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, that hath been prepared *

* Το πυρ το αιωνιον, το ητοιμασμενον.

for the devil and his angels: For I was hungry, and ye gave me not to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.'"

"Then shall they also answer him saying--'Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not come unto thee?'"

"Then shall he answer them saying--'Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least ye did it not to me.'"

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into everlasting life." 41-46.

The same test is applied to the wicked of the Gentiles, and by it they are condemned justly. And here the rule applies—"The *wages of sin* is *death*, but the *gift of God* is *everlasting life* through Jesus Christ our Lord." The lost perish *justly*, and according to the rightful interpretation of the law of nature under which they lived. The righteous enter into life of *mercy alone*; through abounding grace giving them beyond their desert.

They "go away," because the land on which they are judged is the land of Israel, and they, as Gentiles, return to their former place of abode. But the very expression adds another proof that they are not the members of the church. "The righteous *shall* go into life eternal." But eternal life is to the church, or believers in Jesus, not a thing future, but at once bestowed on faith. "He that believeth on the Son, *hath* everlasting life:" John iii, 36.

It has been justly remarked, that there is a very observable difference between the words of approbation and those of rejection. Of the righteous it is said—"Come ye *blessed of my Father.*" But of the perishing it is not said—"Depart ye *cursed of my Father,*" for while there is election with God, and it is needful that the energy of the Godhead should be put forth to bring any to life, there is no putting forth of the power of God to hinder any from eternal life. "I have no pleasure in him that dieth, saith the Lord God, where-

fore turn yourselves, and live ye:" Ezek. xviii, 32. "God our Saviour, who *is willing* (*θελει*) *that all should be saved* and come unto the knowledge of the truth:" 1 Tim. ii, 4. Man's ruin is of himself; his rising again is of the Lord.

Nor, again, is it said, that the fire was prepared for men, but it was for Satan. It was prepared for Satan, who blasted the fair scene of creation by the successful temptation of man.

But we may also observe, that it is not said—"Enter the kingdom prepared for *me and my angels*," as it is said, that the fire is for Satan and his angels. For it is declared concerning the habitable earth in its future state, that it is to be ruled, not by angels, but by men: Heb. ii.

The curse comes upon them because they have shown no mercy, and done no kindness to the Jew. But we know from several places of the prophets, that they will exercise cruelty towards them. Thus, Psalm xlv, 10—15: "They which hate us spoil for themselves. Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat; and hast scattered us among the heathen. Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by our price. Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the peoples. My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me."

They are thus led away to punishment, and that punishment eternal. For the infliction of the thousand years is no sooner over, than that of eternity begins. And the life of the justified is eternal; for the only persons that are expressly described as dying during the millennium, (so far as my memory serves me, Isa. lxv, 20; Jer. xxxi, 29—33,) are those *who sin*. But these are the elect and especially blessed of God, and their life will be eternal.

The present parable answers questions that are likely often to occur to a student of prophecy—Who, beside the Jews, are to people the renewed earth?

And how are they to be judged who never heard of the law, or of Jesus? We have, on both questions, replies calculated to satisfy us. These are the Gentiles that are called on to rejoice with God's people. They are the Gentiles that glorify God for His *mercy*: Rom. xv. For while they are tried by a test that is suited to those who never heard the revealed will of God, they are dealt with in mercy for the sake of the promise to Abraham; and to Abraham's seed, Christ Jesus. They enter the kingdom on the ground of mercy alone. For to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, is but a part of the duties that might justly be required, even of those who never knew of the revealed law of God. And even had they been greatly benevolent, on this they could have founded no claim, for it could not put away one of their sins. But at this point grace steps in, and Jesus, in consideration of His Father's election, and their kindness imputed to Himself, grants them a recompence infinitely beyond their desert. The decision nevertheless is not *arbitrary*, (as men speak,) that is, without any declared ground for the good pleasure of God; but it has a foundation in reason and justice, so that those rejected and finally lost could not complain; while the saved must confess that infinite mercy and the election of God have prevailed to snatch them from a like portion.

Each of the three parties that has come in review takes a different place in the promised kingdom. These are the elect of the Father, not given to Jesus that they may be *one with Him*, as we are, (John xvii,) but they are predestined to be subjects of His holy and happy kingdom over renewed creation. For that is the time for which the creation is groaning and looking forward: Rom. viii. But further, we see a distinction in the parable itself, between the *brethren* of the king, and these his *subjects*. This gives us the place of the Jew in that day, as compared with the Gentile. Those of the church who are counted worthy will be in heavenly glory in the New Jerusalem, ruling, jointly

with Christ, the earth and all things. The *Jew* will find his centre of glory in the earthly Jerusalem, which will be the point of communication between heaven and earth. It will be also the centre, to which from every quarter of the renewed earth, the nations will go up yearly to worship: Isa. lxvi.

This distinction of position is typified, as I believe, in the opening scene in Genesis, where we have the place of Adam and his sons, as related to the living creatures of earth; and beside this, his peculiar and special relation to Eve his bride.

Of the judgment presented in the text we have, I judge, a type in David's dealings with Moab, *after he had smitten the Philistines*. "And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; *even with two lines measured he put to death, and with one full line to keep alive*. And so the Moabites became David's servants:" 2 Sam. viii, 2.

Let us next notice the connexion of the present parable with the Drag-net. I *now* believe them to refer to one and the same judgment, and not to the nominally Christian nations. And the evidence of this will, I think, be clear, if we consider the points of resemblance.

1. Fish roaming untamed, and without even a nominal master, answer well to the nations of the heathen who are left to themselves; but not well to nations professedly Christian.

2. The assembling of the parties from places distant from each other, and bringing them together to another spot for judgment, is, however, (to my mind,) the decisive point of resemblance between the Drag-net, and the Sheep and Goats. This distinguishes both parables from the judgment of the wheat-field. In the two former, a work is going on at the same time, on both good and bad. In the wheat-field there is a succession of actions, affecting *first the evil, and then the good*. In *these, the angels gather both good and evil confusedly from out of their native countries, into the land of Israel,*

before the judgment begins: but in the wheat-field, judgment begins on the spot in which both are growing. In the wheat-field the wheat and tares are not judged in each other's presence; here *one and the same place and scene on earth witnesses the sentence on both*. Now the judgment of the Church of Christ, (if I am not in error,) is as independent of an earthly centre, as its gathering by the preaching of the gospel; and its scenes take place in heaven after the resurrection. But into our present parable the resurrection does not enter. It is a judgment of the living alone. Nor, again, does the Church consist of an election from the Gentiles only, while the netfull, on the contrary, is from the Gentiles alone: Rom. ix, 24.

3. Again, the mixture and confusion at first of the good and evil fish, and of the sheep and the goats, is a strong feature of resemblance; while the angels appear as agents of the Son of man in both.

4. The separation effected at length is another point of agreement; the only difference being, that *angels* are said to effect it in the one case, and the Son of man in the other. But the agency of the angels of the Son of man would be virtually his agency, and the difference is perfectly reconcilable.

5. The place of separation is the same—the land of Israel and the vale of Jehoshaphat.

6. The place of punishment is the same, and its instrument eternal fire.

7. The rule of decision is the same. The separation is produced by an intuitive knowledge of their kinds. The good are discerned from the bad fish by the eye; the sheep are severed from the goats by a knowledge that enters at a glance.*

* I may also add several verbal agreements—

Συναγωγὴ	}	Αφοριεῖ.
Συμυχθῆσεται		Αφοριουσι.

Both parties of the saved are named *δίκαιοι*: Matt. xiii, 49; xxv, 37, 46.

Καθίσει	}	Καμινὸν τοῦ πυρὸς.
Καθίσαντες		Τὸ πῦρ τοῦ αἰωνίου.

8. Each of the two parables is *the last of its series of seven*. For the great prophecy of Matt. xxiv is divided into two parts at ver. 31. And each of these is divided into seven other parts. The latter half contains seven parables; of which the Sheep and Goats is the last. And not only so, but both of them follow after the mysteries of the kingdom concerning the Church of Christ; and both were spoken to the disciples alone.

The structure of the parable consists, unlike the usual one, of *eight* divisions; but I have not noticed any verbal symmetries.

1	31—33	Gathering, Separation.
2	34—36	Address to Sheep,
3	37—38	Answer of Sheep.
4	40	King's reply.
5	41—43	Address to Goats.
6	44	Answer of Goats.
7	45	King's reply.
8	46	Issue to both.

THE

UNJUST STEWARD;

OR

THE USE OF MONEY.

BY R. GOVETT.

Third Edition.

THE UNJUST STEWARD.

LUKE xvi. 1—13.

JESUS gives His disciples directions concerning the use of money in the parable which is to engage our attention.

1. "He said moreover also to His disciples :—There was a certain rich man, who had a steward ; and he was accused to him as wasting * his goods.

2. And having called him, he said unto him, ' Why do I hear this of thee ? Render in the account of thy stewardship ; for thou shalt not be able any more to be steward.'

3. But the steward said within himself, ' What shall I do ? for my lord is taking away the stewardship from me ; to dig I have not strength ; to beg I am ashamed.

4. ' I know [am resolved] what I will do : that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.'

5. And having called to him each one of the debtors of his own lord, he said to the first, ' How much owest thou to my lord ? ' But he said, ' A hundred baths of oil.' And he said to him, ' Receive thy writing, and having sat down, write quickly fifty.' Then he said to another, ' But how much owest thou ? ' But he said, ' A hundred cors of wheat.' And he saith to him, ' Receive thy writing, and write eighty.'

6. And the master praised the steward of injustice, because he acted prudently : for the children of this age are, for their own generation, † more prudent than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends out of the mammon of injustice, ‡ that when ye fail, they may receive you into the everlasting tents.

7. He that is faithful in the least, is faithful also in much : and he who is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much. If therefore you have not been faithful in the false mammon, who will trust you with the true ? And if, in that which is another's § ye have not been faithful, who will give you that which shall be your own ? No domestic can serve two lords : for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or he will attach himself to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

* Ως διασκορπιζων.

† Εις την γενεαν την εαυτων.

‡ Αδικια. In Heb. שקר or מרמה.

§ Εν τω αλλοτριω. "Another's." To put in the word "man" is not only needless, but, as in many like instances, it confuses the sense.

LUKE xvi.
Verses. Divisions. Analysis. Characteristic word. Steward.

1	1	Accusation of steward.	"Steward."	Accused.
2	2	Master rebukes and dismisses.	"Stewardship."	Discharged.
3	3	Steward deliberates	"Steward."	Doubtful as to plan.
4	4	Steward resolves.	"Stewardship."	Resolved as to plan.
5-7	5	1st Lesson Steward and debtors.	"Lord." (<i>Kυριος</i>)	Execution of plan.
8, 9	6	1st Lesson Jesus commends. Our own interests.	"Lord." (<i>Kυριος</i>)	Praised.
10-13	7	2nd Lesson Jesus disapproves. Our responsibility.	"Lord." (<i>Kυριος</i>)	Blamed.

NOTE. Though I have adopted this division of the parable, as seemingly proved by the occurrences of the catchwords in their usual places, yet the intellectual division of the parable would seem to be somewhat different; No. 3 would then consist of verses 3, 4; No. 4, of verses 5-7; No. 5, of 8, 9; No. 6, of 10-12; and No. 7, of verse 13.

I. In the present parable, by the steward is intended the head-officer of the household of antiquity, who had the charge of all his master's goods, and of his slaves; and whose duty it was, to distribute to each the provisions for the day, or week, or month. But the steward in this case, was accused of being in the habit of robbing his master by wasteful expenditure; nor was this owing to ignorance, and incapacity to manage the business; for we see in the close, how cleverly he provided for himself. The waste arose from want of principle. As usually is the case, such faithlessness was at length discovered, and notice given of it to the master.

II. He calls the steward before him, requires him to render in the reckoning of his management, and retains him in office only till he shall have had time to make up his accounts.

III. This is a severe blow to him. He hoped, it appears, always to be steward, to retain a quiet and comfortable place in his old age: but his hope is cut

off. He therefore takes a view of his circumstances, and inquires very naturally—'What is to become of me? No one will take me as steward again after being dismissed from my master for waste. I have not strength to take the place of a common day-labourer, and after having been steward, I cannot descend to become a beggar.' It is evident then, from the steward's debate with himself, that he was conscious that the accusation was true. He knew, that he could not clear himself of the charge: he therefore dismisses that from his thought. He makes no question of his master's interests, but only of his own.

IV. A thought suddenly strikes him. He would provide himself a refuge, when the stewardship failed. He would make himself friends among his lord's debtors, that they might be willing to offer him a home with them, when he was no longer steward. His plan therefore, was to call together his lord's debtors, as though he wished to settle accounts with them before making up his own. But he designed to lower the rent of each below the due and fitting sum formerly agreed upon. These debtors were, I suppose, his master's tenants, and the hundred baths of oil,* and the hundred cors† of wheat which they were bound to furnish respectively, were the rent of their land. So we find: Matt. xxi. 34; Luke xx.

V. He lowers therefore their rent; the one by a half, the other by a fifth. This was his clever device. He bribes them to become rogues along with himself, and gainers by his knavery, in the full assurance, that, in consideration of their lowered rent, they would be willing to grant him provision, and a home from year to year for the rest of his days. If they offended him, he would have his revenge by informing his master. They were therefore bound to do him kindness, by a sense of gratitude, and of their own interests.

VI. But the affair comes to the master's knowledge. He hears of the steward's plan of providing for himself,

* 100 Baths are equal to a thousand gallons. † 100 Cors of wheat are equal to 3200 pecks.

and he says—‘It is a very clever plan. He is a very cunning knave, and knows full well how to take care of his own interests.’ Observe, not *Jesus*, but the steward’s master praises the steward.* And the master praises the steward only for his prudent regard to his own affairs. *Not* that the master (and much less the Lord Jesus) *thought him right in doing so*. The master thought him a villain, even while he praised his cleverness in providing for himself, when his means seemed so limited, and his position so unfavourable. And Jesus calls him the “steward of *injustice*” (ver. 8), to shew us His opinion of him.

But the great question is—How does the parable apply to us as believers? What is it intended to teach us as Jesus’ disciples? And the answer is: First, wisdom, forethought, provision for ourselves for the future; and secondly, faithfulness. The master commends in the steward his plan of raising up for himself, out of the money committed to him, friends who would give him a home, when thrust out of his former situation.

But let us see how fully the circumstances of the parable resemble ours. Each of us is the steward, and Jesus is the rich man. This is the place that Jesus Himself takes. *The master praised the steward*. “And I say unto you.”

All that we have is not our own, but God’s. It is committed to us, not to use it for ourselves, but for Him. But, as the steward was accused to his master as an habitual waster of his goods, so are we. Satan is the great accuser, and he has represented us on high as spending wastefully, and unworthily upon ourselves, the goods lent us to be employed in His service. And we must confess it true, and be silent under the accusation, as the steward was. The proofs are too evident to be denied. As also the steward was reproved by the master for his waste, and was bid to render in his account, so is it with ourselves. We are taught, how displeasing self-indulgence and

* In proof of this to the English reader, it may be noticed that the word ‘lord’ is written with a small ‘l.’

waste are to Christ; and are informed, that we shall have to give account of ourselves to God. Our master is a “king that would take account of his servants:” Matt. xviii. 23. “After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them:” Matt. xxv. 19. “So then, every one of us shall *give account* of himself to God:” Rom. xiv. 12. We have received warning that we shall be put out of our stewardship at death. We must render up then all the means that are committed to our hands, and our present stewardship will be at an end. What conduct, then, befits us under these circumstances? Just to act as the steward did. He reflected what was best to be done. He must enter on a new and untried scene, and he desires to prepare himself beforehand, that he might not be launched upon the wide world, without power to provide for himself, or friends to lend him a hand and a home. Even thus should we think within ourselves. God is about to put us out of our stewardship; He will soon take us away from the means we possess, and from all this present scene. It should bring us, therefore, to the reflection—“What then ought to be done in these circumstances?—what is most prudent with regard to our own interests?” We should have a plan, and act it out. “For there is no work nor device in Hadees whither thou goest:” Eccl. ix. 10. “The night cometh wherein none can work:” John ix. 4. Our stewardship will soon be at an end. How then can we manage it most profitably for ourselves? for we may not carry away our wealth when we die. The steward argued with himself—‘I cannot steal and carry off my lord’s money; but I can make use of what is intrusted to me, to raise up friends who will help me, when I am turned out of my present situation.’ So neither may we carry away with us any thing. “We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out:” 1 Tim. vi. 7.

This is the very point at which Jesus takes up the steward’s words and ways, and recommends them to us. His forethought for his interest displayed itself, in making him friends who would stand by him after he

left his stewardship, in consideration of kindness done them while he was steward. He employed with eagerness, resolution, and expedition, the hold he yet had on the stewardship, in order to provide for himself when his hold on it should have ceased. 'So,' says the Lord Jesus, 'I say to you, You have only a short and uncertain power over this world's goods; use them while you may, to make yourselves friends. Use your money, not so that it shall come to an end, and all its advantage cease as soon as you are dead; but so employ the goods intrusted to you during the short interval before your stewardship ceases, as to win advantages that will abide by you for ever.'

But the application is yet more particular. Put in practice his very plan. The Saviour's counsel is—"Make yourselves friends" as he did: not friends for this life, who will requite you again; for against this the Lord cautions us: Luke xiv. 12—14. No: you are about to leave this world: about to enter on the shores of that which is unseen: would you enter it a lonely unknown wanderer? Would you wish, when ushered into the invisible world, to find yourself without a friend? Would you like to be a stranger in a vast city, who knows no one, and whom no one knows? Human nature shrinks from it. If so, then, "make yourselves friends:" friends who will be looking out for your coming, who will go forth to meet you, and welcome your entrance with delight. But how have we the power to make friends? "Out of the mammon of injustice." By "the mammon of injustice" (or unrighteousness) is meant the false riches; riches wrongly so called. This meaning of the expression is proved by ver. 11, where the "*unrighteous* mammon" is opposed to the "*true* riches." So 1 Tim. vi. 17.* The riches of the present time are not true riches, but only seeming wealth: and this is all that is within your reach now; the eternal riches are the true riches, but not yet bestowed. Then, says the Saviour, out of the worldly

* Similarly do the LXX. use the word in the Greek of the Old Testament.

possessions which God has given into your charge here, be making friends. Use what God gives you, not selfishly, to lavish upon yourselves; for this will not make you friends; but to show kindness to others. This is the true use and glory of wealth, to make ourselves eternal friends thereby. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." But it is not only more *blessed*—more like to God, who ever gives, but it is also more *prudent for ourselves*. Not prudent as the world regards it, for to the world it seems folly. The world's prudence is to lay up for its own use. 'I cannot give; I may need it for myself.' But the believer's prudence reaches much further than time: he is engaged in so investing his money, as to bring him in an eternal revenue. There are many ways of making friends with the mammon of unrighteousness. 'Here is an orphan, there a widow, yonder a sick and poor brother in the Lord; that poor family is distressed for employment.' To give, in such cases, is to make friends out of the false and shadowy riches of the world. These friends will last, when the possessions of this world will be no more. Hence, as I suppose, while the parable extends to showing kindness to unbelievers, the persons principally contemplated seem to be believers; for these will be friends for eternity: friends, who, when we die, will meet and welcome us to the everlasting tabernacles. "Let us do good unto all men, specially unto them that are of the household of faith." You must soon "fail:" death will seize you, and put a sudden stop to your stewardship. But if you use mammon as the Saviour admonishes you, you will turn the fleeting treasures of time into those which are eternal, and be welcomed by happy spirits who have known your love, to the blessed mansions of eternity. For the tabernacles on high are the contrasts to the present. "I must shortly put off *this tabernacle*," says Peter: 2 Peter i. 14. But those are eternal.

Give to others, so that they may be under perpetual obligation to you. If they do not return it here, they will hereafter. "They cannot recompense thee, but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

If they forget your kindness now, they will remember it by and by, when you enter on the mansions above. The widow whom you supported, the orphan whom you instrumentally saved, by wise expenditure of this world's goods, from beggary and sin, will meet you as you rise from the grave; and show you, with joyous face beaming eternal thanks, the way to the everlasting mansions in the city of God, which grace has provided for you. You will not be alone in that city of the just. Every one who has tasted of your liberality will meet and receive you with gratitude. While he who spent all upon himself will keenly experience his folly and imprudence, you will feel that you *have* whatever you *gave away*.

The object of this parable then, is to teach the children of light, wisdom, or rather prudence; that is, a careful regard to their own interests. For, says the Saviour, "The children of this world are for their generation more prudent than the children of light."

The men of this age are not *really* and *absolutely* wiser than the children of the age which is to come, but only in one single respect. They are wiser or more prudent "*for their generation*." The children of light see that the things of this present time are passing away, and that the only objects worthy of steady pursuit are eternal. They are engaged therefore in heart, and determined to follow after eternal realities, and this is true wisdom. The worldly, on the other hand, are chasing the shadows of this present scene, and this is perfect folly; the world, and the period of mortal life, their own times, and the time of their children, is the sphere for which the men of the world are providing. This is their "generation." The eternal ages of glory are the sphere and "generation" of the believer. But while the believer is wise in his choice of the true end, and the worldly is foolish in his choice of a poor and false end; yet, says the Saviour, the worldly is more prudent in regard to time, than the believer, in regard to eternity.

There is no need for any to exhort the worldly to take heed to their own present interests. This is the first principle of their souls, and embodied in their plans,

words, and life. But there is need of exhortation to the children of light, to be diligent in the pursuit of the real and true object, which they have set before themselves. "I will be rich;" says a man of the world to himself. With this determination, how steadily, and self-denyingly does he keep the design in view; turning to his advantage every opportunity that comes within his reach: letting nothing go without receiving its full value; lessening, as far as may be, his expenses; putting out his money boldly and lavishly, where it is sure of a large return; and sacrificing present comfort for future wealth. Even thus, should the child of light say to himself: 'I desire to be rich too; only to be rich for my generation, that is for eternity; to be rich towards God. I will therefore see how I can turn every farthing I possess, so as to produce me the greatest return when I enter heaven. I covet bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not.' We have known many determined to be rich in this world, but have we ever known *one* so steadily setting himself to be rich in the next? Yet this were prudence for eternity, as the other is for time. The worldly then are wiser for the present scene than the believer is for eternity; and the word of Jesus is fulfilled.

Sometimes our Lord bids us seek for *honour* in the coming kingdom; now He calls on us to be *rich* in the kingdom of glory and of God. The houses of the rich in this world are a great part of their wealth; but they are perishing; the owners are removed from them, and they decay by age, are destroyed by violence, or are ruined by sudden fire. But before you is set the hope of everlasting habitations; a mansion on high.

The use then of the unrighteous mammon, consists in giving it away. For this is the wisdom of God, this the trial of faith. To be rich for eternity, you must act in a way quite opposite to those who would be rich for time. He who would be rich now, hoards up for himself, or spends for himself, so as to produce the best return. But he who would be rich hereafter must now give to others, in order then to be rich.

VII. But the Saviour proceeds to take up another

part of the parable. He had bid us note the prompt cleverness of the steward in providing for his own interests : He had recommended us to be endeavouring, with the means now in our hands, to raise ourselves friends for eternity ; and had exhorted the disciples to imitate the steady pursuit of the worldly after the riches of time, by their like steady pursuit of the riches of God and of eternity. But there was yet another most weighty lesson to be taught. He looks at the steward in regard of his *responsibility to his master*. Money is not our own, but a trust committed in order that we may render in an account at the last. He teaches us therefore next, the use of money, considered as involving responsibility to Himself. ‘ You are stewards,’ he would say ; ‘ what you have is not your own. You are to use it, therefore, not for yourself, or with a view to your own pleasure ; but for God. You are a steward, and it is “ required in stewards that a man be found faithful.” If then you reckon it as your own, and determinè to spend it as you please, in luxurious eating and drinking, in sumptuous clothing, in jewellery, expensive furniture, amusements, music, unworthy books, and so on, this is abuse of your trust ; and for this you will have to give account. You are not only accused to your master of wasting his goods, and ready to be turned out of your commission, but you will have to answer it when you render in your account.’ “ He who is faithful in the least, is faithful also in much ; and he who is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much.” That is, God is now trying us as His stewards ; by committing to our hands that which is of small value. All the riches of the world are but poor and valueless, when compared to things to come. But though they be of small value, yet *they serve to shew the characters of men*. All can tell by our conduct with regard to the little with which God intrusts us now, how we should behave if placed in a nobler sphere. If then we prove faithful in the use of the wealth of this world, we shall still be accounted faithful when we enter upon the loftier scenes of the manifested kingdom. Every day of life is either proving us trustworthy, or the reverse ; and according to the

character we have displayed here, so shall we be regarded hereafter. And justly so, for character once formed amid the lower scenes, abides through the greater. The servant who has manifested himself careful in things of smaller moment, will prove careful if he be advanced to things of higher importance. The tempers that dwell in the soul amidst the employments of this world, will still reside there, and exhibit themselves, when the scene is enlarged. And therefore he who has been found trustworthy in the things of earth, will be found trustworthy, and treated as such, in the vastly more important ones, soon to burst upon us in heaven. He who has managed faithfully only a field, would be as faithful for his lord, if he gave him the charge of a province. And, in like manner, he who has been careless and faithless to his trust in a small matter, would be so, in case his sphere were greatly enlarged. Change of circumstances does not change the character. The servant who stole pence from his master, when shillings were intrusted to him, would not become honest, if his master gave him the oversight of thousands of pounds. The present state then, is not only our education for the greater scene in which we are about to enter, but our present conduct will be remembered there. The tempers and dispositions that are fostered here, will go with us into the world beyond, and the acts of those tempers will be recompensed there. And as God does not (any more than any other master) desire to have His goods wasted, He is trying us here, to prove who are worthy of trust hereafter.

Having then stated the matter as to the principle, the Saviour proceeds in the application. Jesus desires to find trustworthy servants ; and He will deal out to the disciples honour and riches eternal, as they have shewn themselves faithful or not. They must give in their accounts. If they have conducted themselves faithlessly in their present trust, they will not be promoted hereafter, and on high. The unjust steward is turned out of that which he has ; a fresh commission is neither expected, nor granted him. If you have abused worldly riches, which are merely a shadow, who shall give you

the true riches? Not God, for He requires faithfulness in His stewards! And yet, none but He can give it you. Here, therefore, *recompense according to works* even for believers is taught us; though not *salvation by works*. If you have been faithful in a little, you will be entrusted with much. The parable of the Talents proves that: for he who used his talent to make it ten, is promoted over ten cities; with the remark from his master, that such fidelity in a little, was recompensed by authority over much.

The wealth of this world is the false mammon. It seems to be riches, but indeed it is not. It calls itself a thing real and stable; yet it continually flees from him who calls himself its possessor; and he is taken from it. It is exposed to the thief, and to losses from within and without; it is only the shadow of that which is on high. There all is real, fixed, and certain. Thief cannot enter; moth does not waste. Neither violence from without, nor corruption and decay from within, endanger it; nor is the possessor snatched away from it. The wealth that is coming is the true. It is to be your aim, therefore, so to discharge your trust amid the fleeting possessions of this present state, that God may account you worthy of the true riches when you enter on His mansions on high. Your circumstances there will answer fully to your conduct here. If here you waste His goods, you will not only be ashamed at His audit-day, but you will not be entrusted with the heavenly riches. As you have shewn yourself unworthy of trust in the one, so will the Lord esteem you unworthy of confidence in the other. Who will put confidence in a steward dismissed his place for carelessness or dishonesty? And in our case there is no choice of masters; the one offended is the only one who can promote us. Promotion belongs only to the trusty. Shew yourselves therefore trusty in what is committed to you, and you will be advanced one day to a position nobler by far.

But not merely is the wealth of this world falsely so called, because of its instability, so that it is not worthy to be named a possession; it is also unworthy of the name of riches on another ground. It does not belong

to the party who holds it. He may think it is his, and call it so, and use it as if it were such. But indeed it is "*another's*." Riches are not ours, they are God's. He never *gives* them to any in its full sense, so as to abandon the right to them, and to permit the possessor to do as he pleases with them. He *trusts* them to many, but he commits them to all only as to stewards; he intends that all shall give Him an account of what they have had, and how they have expended it. Not only then does prudence dictate, that we should use what we have as best will subserve our future interests in eternity, but a sense of duty and honesty should keep us watchful. 'The money I have is not mine. I must lay it out, then, not as on myself, and for myself, but as a steward for God.' If you thus act, something shall one day be made over to you, that shall be yours for ever—yours in full possession. Herein your expectation is greater than the steward's. He looked for a place in *another's house*; you will have one of *your own*. But if otherwise, how can you obtain wealth which shall be yours? Such can come only from God; and if He find you a faithless steward, he will, after the example of the parable, rather turn you out of what was committed, than impart to you new possessions.

The service of mammon, that is, the acquiring and laying up wealth for ourselves, is impossible to be reconciled with the service of God in the matter. There is no middle course in the use of money, between the worldly use of it, and that pointed out by Christ. God and mammon are opposite in their tempers. God is love; mammon is selfishness. And as their tempers are different, so are the services and requirements of each, not only different, but opposite. The one says, "Lay up;" the other, "Give away." The servant must fall in with one or the other of these masters. If he loves mammon, he must neglect God, and in a measure refuse His service. If he loves God, he will serve Him, and so disobey mammon. The service of mammon is abuse of the stewardship which God has committed, and to the loss of your best interests in eternity.

But now, in conclusion, a few remarks upon the peculiarities of the parable. The question has often suggested itself both to friends and foes—‘Why did Jesus present to our imitation a *wicked* man, and his deeds?’ To this we may offer a two-fold reply. 1st. That it is not only lawful, but right to learn from the evil, if they can teach us, either directly or indirectly, that which is good. Our Lord bids us imitate even the *serpent*. “Be ye wise as serpents;” so that we imitate them not in their venom, but are “harmless as doves.”

2nd. But the chief reason, as I am persuaded, why Jesus took the case of an unjust steward instead of a just one, is, because He wished to impress on His followers a double lesson. Had He presented the case of a *just* steward, He could have shewn only the man’s fidelity to his master, and consequent reward. But the Saviour wished to manifest to us the full scope offered us, for prudence in consulting our own interests in the present use of money, as well as the call to faithfulness in the certainty of our giving account to God. By holding up the instance of an unscrupulous, unprincipled man, who at any rate would push his own interests, regardless of his lord’s, the Saviour finds occasion to invite us to be as diligent as the steward, in the prudent regard to our own eternal interests. From the address of the culprit He teaches us the *advantages* of the prudent use of wealth in its eternal consequences. And by the sad results to the steward of his faithlessness, displayed in his rebuke and casting out of the stewardship, He would instruct us in the like *disadvantageous consequences* of unfaithfulness, to ourselves. The steward was prudent, and reaped the reward of his prudence; but he was faithless, and reaped also the sad recompense of his faithlessness. While then *he was prudent, but faithless*, be *you prudent and faithful*. By his prudence he gained friends. By his abuse of his trust he lost his post of honour. You, if prudent, will by your heavenly prudence, gain friends, as he did, only friends for eternity: and if faithful, you will be displaced from an earthly stewardship, only to be promoted to enduring possessions on high. As the master praised his steward

for his prudence, so (it is implied) that Jesus will praise us, if we act as prudently. Yea, with further reason, for we shall then have acted agreeably to His instructions as obedient servants. By his prudence the steward won for himself friends among his lord’s tenants, and praise from his lord; as from his faithlessness he derived blame, and the loss of his character and place. But what was divided in the parable, may be united, yea, must be united, in you. If you are foolish for yourself, you will by the same conduct be faithless to your master; and if faithless to your master, you cannot make friends for yourself. If prudence extorted praise even from one made unwilling by injury received, how much more shall praise flow forth willingly from your Master in heaven, if to diligence for yourself, you have joined faithfulness to Him! If prudence could raise up friends, even when the master was offended with the steward, how much more certain shall the result be when the master is himself well-pleased? *He* gives the home in *our case*, and provides the eternal mansions: the friends *we* make *only welcome* us!

It is extremely worthy of notice to remark, how Jesus puts the latter of the two lessons. He does not say, ‘He found a home, who expected nothing from his master because of his being false to his trust; but you may expect something from your master if you have been faithful.’ This would have set us upon wrong ground, and made us ready to calculate upon our merits as deserving reward. Therefore Jesus states the matter as a logician would say, *destructively*. If unfaithfulness be discovered, a certain ground is established why promotion should not be granted to the faithless servant. But there lies no natural ground of claim for promotion when faithfulness has been displayed. The guilty betrayer of his trust is worthy to be sent adrift: but it does not follow that the trusty steward must be advanced. Reward and promotion shall indeed follow upon faithfulness: not because it is due, but because of promised mercy. We may argue therefore certainly as to the case of the *unfaithful*, while we may not argue from this parable upwards to the case of the faithful.

There is one great difference between the case of God our heavenly Master, and the earthly steward, which makes a corresponding difference in the result, highly worthy of notice. In things of this life, a steward cannot use a master's goods for his own advantage without damage to his employer, and betrayal of his trust. But in our service to the Lord, we may use the wealth He has given us, in promoting our own eternal advantage, not only without injuring God's cause and interests, but to their best advancement. *God's interest, our brethren's, and our own, are united, and coincide, when we give to others.* We are prudent for ourselves, in making friends for eternity; we are trustworthy towards God, in expending the goods committed us in the manner He approves. The steward lost his principal friend by the injury he inflicted on his master; while his prudence raised him up others. But *we* may, by gracious prudence and faithfulness, find both our Master and our Master's tenants our friends at the last, prepared, the one to welcome, the other to recompense us. In giving away to others the money of this world, you are not wronging your Lord as the steward wronged his; nay, rather, owing to the difference of the cases, you are executing your trust aright. It would be to defraud your master, were you selfish to hoard up money, or foolishly to squander it upon the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life. This would be folly for eternity; for money so spent is lost; and it would be faithlessness to your trust, calling forth rebuke, and loss in the day of account.

1st. Imitate then the steward's prudence, and you will meet a like reward. Spend every shilling if possible, so that it shall bring in a hundredfold hereafter.

2nd. Imitate *not* his faithlessness to his charge, lest to you it bring damage eternally, as it did to him in time. As you are stewards, faithfulness is the prime quality required. Like him are you situated as to present duty, and as to future recompence. On your acquitting yourself conscientiously of your trust, turns, not your salvation, but the degree of your glory or dishonour hereafter. Dispose of what you have, in remembrance that it is

God's, to be accounted for before the Lord Jesus, and therefore to be spent for Him now.

In the first lesson of imitating the steward, the result is traced to your own deeds as the natural consequence, "*Make yourselves friends.*" In the second, touching your responsibility, the true riches are traced to God's bestowal of them in the capacity of a judge recompensing you, "*Who will give you your own?*" As money is your own to dispose of, use it for your own future interests. As it is *not* your own, use it with an eye to God's glory. And the time is short; let us use it diligently therefore! The time is uncertain; let us seize every opportunity!

The worldly, in putting out their money for their own advantage, inquire, in general, but two things: first, the goodness of the security; and secondly, the percentage or interest it will yield. On neither of these points need you stand in doubt. Your security for repayment is the *word of God*. "*He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth to the Lord; and that which he hath given, will He pay him again:*" Prov. xix. 17. And the return for what you lay out is not as the world gives, five for a hundred, or at the best ten for a hundred. God gives a hundred-fold the sum put out: ten thousand for a hundred! Matt. xix. 29.

How marvellously and graciously would the Lord thus arm us against our natural selfishness, by shewing that our very self-love should prompt us to give to others, as the best way of providing for ourselves! And how it becomes the believer to expend his money with an eye to that day, when, before our Lord and Saviour, we shall give account of our stewardship!